

No.9

Forest Participation Services

Villagers as Forest Managers and Governments “Learning to Let Go”

**The case of Duru-Haitemba &
Mgori forests in Tanzania**

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Villagers as Forest Managers and Governments “Learning to Let Go” - the case of Duru-Haitemba and Mgori Forests in Tanzania

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Note on author

Dr. Liz Wily is a land tenure and rural development specialist with 25 years experience in third world countries. Over the last eight years she has worked as a freelance consultant in the forest management sector.

Preface

Negotiating roles for forest management: constraints and opportunities

An analysis of the evolution of approaches to forest management in Africa over recent decades shows that we have passed through two main phases and are now entering a third:

The technocratic era: management for the forest and against the people

Up to the early seventies, priority was given to the trees at the expense of the people who use them. It was thought that enhanced technical capacity in forest management would be sufficient to guarantee their renewal for the good of the nation. Programmes aimed at developing capacity primarily concerned technical matters and were intended for government staff.

However, over the years, significant failures of "top-down" initiatives, driven solely by technical considerations and from the top led to the realisation that bad forest management was not due to lack of technical skills alone.

The participation era: forest management for and by the people

The flaws of the technocratic approach have led to the pursuit of the concept and practice of *participation*, as a means to ensure that local people's interests and needs are taken into account in the decisions concerning the fate of forests. Participation gradually became a *sine qua non* condition for success of forestry initiatives in rural areas. It has been

politically incorrect to criticise the concept and it invariably constitutes a requirement for securing donor support.

However, in recent years, "participation" has proven difficult to implement when it means going beyond mere consultation and achieving active involvement of forest users in decision making. Reasons for this include:

- active participation implies a process of social transformation. As such, it requires commitment and flexibility over long periods and does not always fit target-oriented agendas; be they by governments alone or with the support of donors;
- participation is often seen as an increase of responsibility given to local people, but without a corresponding increase in their rights and access to benefits. As such, participation actually becomes a burden and is usually refused or passively accepted;
- somewhat paradoxically, the pressure for participation (from donors and NGOs) has led to attempts to apply it mechanistically, a little like blueprints. This contradicts one of the original aims of participation, i.e. that it should be adapted to local contexts;
- participation also requires logistical means for advisors (technicians, NGO staff) to be in close contact with rural

dwellers. Such means are often lacking in rural areas.

Even when successful participation is achieved, the sustainability of the new framework for decision-making is often doubtful, for several reasons:

- "success stories" often appear with donor-support but without the need for commitment on the part of government authorities;
- "participation" has tended to focus on the use of resources by people. It has more seldom dealt with institutional participation, i.e. collaboration between all the interest groups.

As a result, participation has been mostly accepted so long as it does not disturb existing power structures. Often this means its restriction to project frameworks; which have a limited lifespan; and where less powerful are called upon to share decision-making.

The emergence of political negotiation: forest management with the people and other actors

It is increasingly apparent that participation is often limited in scope and faces extreme difficulties in scaling up beyond local level.

What has been missing in both the technocratic and the participatory "eras" is the recognition of the *highly political character* of forest management, even at local level. The need for a *social definition* of forest management has been proven by the experience with participation. But this requires negotiations between institutions which represent all existing interest groups,

and especially the weaker ones. Hence, the implementation of participatory forest management needs to be *politically negotiated*. Thus, participation should be accompanied by the development of mechanisms which allow for the negotiation of stakeholders' roles. This implies changes in existing power structures.

To achieve a constructive negotiation process, capacity needs are more institutional than technical. They can be divided into two categories:

- capacity for *negotiation* itself, such as empowerment of the weakest stakeholder(s), which may involve literacy, provision of information, and other activities related to the concept of training for transformation;
- at a later stage, capacities for *sustaining roles*, such as accountability and representativeness of local governance, leadership, and economic resilience.

The highly political nature of these issues explains why they have been poorly dealt with in the development arena, despite the fact that they often constitute the major constraints to sustainable forest management.

Another difficulty concerns the vagueness associated to the term "roles". One can try to overcome this weakness by defining stakeholders' roles via their respective *rights, responsibilities, returns from forest resources and relationships* (i.e. their "4Rs"). Stakeholders' "4Rs" are often unbalanced, a situation which often impairs adequate negotiation and leads to forest decline.

Papers 6,7,8,9 and 10 in this Forest Participation Series illustrate different constraints created by imbalances in stakeholders' roles; but also how these can evolve towards forms of collaboration which are conducive to more sustainable management of the forest.

Samuel Egbe (paper No. 6) provides an overview of the historical evolution of forest tenure and access to forest resources in **Cameroon**.

Natural resource tenure and access policies in Cameroon have, since the colonial period, generally ignored the existence of local populations, done little to strengthen the ability of peasants and their institutions to cope with the blunt nationalisation of the resources upon which their lives are inextricably linked. This unilateral usurpation and top-down approach not only undermined traditional institutions, but demotivated many rural people whose energies could have been mobilised in the management effort.

The author argues that state control and ownership of natural resources has not ensured rational management nor brought about rapid social and economic development. Lack of social legitimacy of forest regulations and policies is considered to be a main reason for such failures.

The thrust of this paper is therefore to examine past experience, and identify constraints and opportunities, in an attempt to engender a more indigenous resource tenure system in Cameroon.

The paper by **Jonas Ibo** and **Eric Léonard** (No. 7) presents a historical

analysis of developments in policy and social practice relating to forest management and conservation, against the economic and social transformations undergone by the Ivory Coast since the beginning of the century. In particular, it seeks to assess the most recent experiments aimed at involving small farmers in the implementation of rehabilitation programmes, based on two examples. This is a rare example in sub-Saharan Africa, where the state officially tackles the issue of encroachment of the forest by farmers, in contrast to the usual "*laissez-faire*" attitude in other African countries. Yet, it does so by means of a strategy aimed at actually excluding farmers from commercial use of the forest resources, however in a "participatory" manner. The last part of the paper discusses possible means to improve this strategy.

In paper No 8, **Alain Pénélon** discusses a study carried out in two forest communities in Eastern-Cameroon. The study had two-fold objectives: to analyse how roles in land and forest resource allocation are defined at village level, and to what extent the provisions on community forestry of the 1994 Forestry Law are applicable at local level.

The author describes nine steps used in the completion of the study. It concerns land differentiation in terms of use and access according to the distance from the village and major problems in the implementation of the New Forestry Law concerning community forestry, i.e. costs, tedious character of the procedure, etc.

The paper finishes with some proposals to improve the existing Law and other

regulations which affect local communities' involvement in forest management.

Liz Wily's paper (No. 9) illustrates how a facilitating role by government has allowed interesting community-based initiatives to take place in the miombo forest of Tanzania. It describes how, in a situation of severe degradation of the forest cover, two communities have met the challenge of achieving sustained, effective control of the use of the forest resource in a very cost-effective way. This was made possible because they were given appropriate rights and access to benefits to effectively assume their responsibilities as forest managers. In her discussion, the author points to some very interesting generic lessons that may be drawn out from these examples.

Finally, Olivier Dubois' paper (No. 10) attempts to provide a synthesis of recent literature - both Anglophone and Francophone - about rights to land and forests in sub-Saharan Africa. These are at the heart of the debate on sustainable land use in this Region, because the dualistic situation where formal and customary rules co-exist creates often confusion and tensions, which result in quasi open access to forest resources.

Policies aimed at improving tenure security have generally failed and reinforced existing power structures, as they only look at the spatial dimension of security, contrasting with the more social aspects of rights built into customary rules. Initiatives such as formal titling of land on the one hand; and codification and formalisation of customary rules on the other hand, have so far not lived up to their expectations. The author discusses more recent experiments and proposals aimed at bridging the gap between customary and formal rules. These concern adaptive legislation, enabling institutional frameworks and ways to convey information to stakeholders. Such actions are just in their infancy and are likely to be difficult to implement, as they threaten to destabilise power structures. Hence the need to allow for experimentation, continuous learning, and building confidence for these attempts to materialise in efficient policies.

Olivier Dubois,
Forestry & Land Use Programme,
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and Development

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No. 1

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Two case studies in Eastern-Cameroon

Aldin Pénelon

No. 10

*Rights and Wrongs of Rights to Land and Forest Resources in sub-Saharan Africa:
bridging the gap between customary and formal rules*

Olivier Dubois

Introduction

This case study relates to two miombo woodlands in Tanzania, **Duru-Haitemba Forest** in Babati District, Arusha Region, and **Mgori Forest** in Singida District, Singida Region. The former comprises an area of nearly 9,000 ha, now under the full ownership and active management of eight registered and incorporated village communities. The latter is a larger and more intact woodland of 40,000 ha, currently managed by five villages, but in legal and institutional collaboration with the local District Council.

Two years ago both woodlands, under government control and management, were in a state of acute decline, with loss of area and species. In the case of Duru-Haitemba this resulted from boundary encroachment and in-forest settlement, excessive wood extraction and livestock grazing, mainly by forest-local communities. In the case of Mgori, the forest was afflicted by uncontrolled clearing for shifting cultivation of commercial finger millet, excessive hunting of the abundant wildlife including elephant, and timber extraction, mainly by outsiders. Today, boundaries are intact, incursion limited, flora and fauna recovering, and both forests protected by a total of more than 200 young Village Forest Guards - and all at no cost to government. These

developments have occurred under the auspices of a Swedish-funded *Regional Forestry Programme* (since ended), and later, *Land Management Programme* with which the author is associated.¹

The need for new approaches to natural forest management in Africa is no longer a matter of debate. Whilst tree-planting on private farms is visibly increasing in sub-Saharan agriculture,² it is as clear that natural forests dwindle apace. This is arguably as much the case for those forests under direct state jurisdiction and management (generally categorised as Forest Reserves) as for those public land or community forests outside direct state control. All forest types are affected, from the moist montane to the open miombo woodlands of east and southern Africa. There is widespread agreement that new, more effective, cheaper and more sustainable ways of retaining and managing natural forests not only need to be found, but tried out on the ground.

A steady trend in this direction is towards regimes which share responsibility with those who live next to forests, and who often have the most immediate vested interest in the forests, both for product use and for catchment purposes. It is well known that such strategies are most advanced in South

¹ The author, an International development consultant based in Nairobi, has acted from the outset as main facilitator of these developments, on behalf of *Orgut Consulting AB*, a Swedish-based consulting group which has been providing technical assistance to natural resource and land management programmes in Tanzania on behalf of SIDA and in conjunction with the Tanzanian Government.

² For example, see 'Not All African Land is Being Degraded: A Recent Survey of Trees on Farms in Kenya Reveals Rapidly Increasing Forest Resources' by Holmgren, Masakha & Sjöholm, in *Ambio* Vol. 23 (7) November 1994.

and South East Asia and a growing body of critical literature is available. Community involvement in natural forest management in Africa is more recent and practice still largely confined to isolated instances. Although governments have for some time been stating in national forestry policies that communities should be involved, agreement as to what constitutes community involvement in natural forest management has been diverse and confused. For the most part community participation has stopped well short of sharing power or control, remaining at the level of 'consultation', or of 'allowing' forest-local communities to use certain forest products more freely, in return for improved respect of Forest Reserve boundaries. In the sister natural resource sector of wildlife management, revenue-sharing schemes have become

the hall-stone of much so-called 'community resource management'.

This case study³ describes a more fulsome scenario of community participation, in which there has been a marked degree of power-sharing - to the extent of communities taking over full responsibility and control of the resource. Accordingly the function of government, previously the formal manager, becomes one of technical adviser and watchdog. In the more advanced case described, the eight communities involved actually now legally own the forest in question.

There is considerable documentation on the story of Duru-Haitemba and Mgori⁴, and rather than describe the process in detail, a brief overview is provided followed by a discussion which draws out significant features and lessons.

³ This paper was originally presented to a World Bank/UNEP Africa Forestry Policy Forum Conference held in Nairobi August 1996.

⁴ See in particular: 'Finding a Way Forward in Natural Forest Management in Tanzania' by H. Sjöholm & Liz Wily in IRDC Currents June 1995; 'Good News From Tanzania: The First Village Forest Reserves' by Liz Wily in FAO Forest Trees and People Newsletter Vol. 29 November 1995; 'Collaborative Forest Management: Villagers & Government: The Case of Mgori in Tanzania' by Liz Wily [forthcoming] Working Paper of FTTP/FAO.

The Case Study: The Forests of Duru-Haitemba and Mgori

Strictly speaking, neither Duru-Haitemba nor Mgori are typologically 'forests' but dry woodlands of the common *miombo* type which spreads over eight states in southern and eastern Africa⁵. In Tanzania alone there are possibly more than fifteen million hectares of this kind of 'forest', which although not always of a notably high or closed canopy type, normally contains high timber volumes and supports a wide range of catchment and utilitarian functions, including wildlife. In Tanzania as elsewhere a good proportion of miombo woodlands are managed today within the institutional framework of state-owned Forest Reserves, along with the fewer moist montane forests which are generally accorded the highest protection status. Most of the remainder falls within public land, a loose tenurial category, which in Tanzania predominately includes land customarily held by communities but over which they have not yet established statutory ownership, and other lands, over which the state exercises main jurisdiction if not ownership, in default of tangible bundles of rights having been declared.

Neither Duru-Haitemba Forest nor Mgori Forest were at any time state-owned and gazetted Forest Reserves. They were however by the 1980s fully intended as Forest Reserves and to this

end had been fully surveyed and demarcated, and all but the publication of Reservation was complete. Indeed, there is no doubt that the process of withdrawing these forests from the public sphere into the hands of the state was the catalyst to both local concern and to the ultimate decision to find a more acceptable - and also more workable - regime of management.

Duru-Haitemba

The earlier, Duru-Haitemba initiative began in September 1994, when the author was invited by the SIDA-funded *Regional Forestry Programme* to work with villagers in and around the Forest to encourage them to support its gazettment and management as a Forest Reserve. Beacons were already on the ground.

It was clear however, that local people did not support the withdrawal of what they regarded as 'their' individual, but adjoining village forests into the hands of the state - indeed, since the posting of Forest Guards to the area some years previously as part of the process, local people had more or less adopted a deliberate policy of 'getting what they could' out of the forest in terms of land and products as fast as they were able, prior to their anticipated exclusion from the area. The forest, basically a series of

⁵ See upcoming CIFOR publication on *Management of Miombo Woodlands* (ed. B. Campbell) which describes all aspects of this forest type in detail. A review on the institutional frameworks within which miombo woodlands are, and could be managed is found therein (Ch. 8: Matose & Wily).

linked ridges of high woodland, was by 1994, heavily degraded and encroached in many places. Even if certain use rights were to be guaranteed, local response to the situation did not suggest that Reservation would lead to effective conservation.

With informal support from the local authorities (Babati District Council), the author and local Forestry Officer thus began a process of exploring with first three, and then all eight villages adjacent to Duru-Haitemba if and how they could conserve and manage the forests themselves. This was to prove a politicising and empowering process, for neither villagers nor village leaders had countenanced the possibility that they might be 'allowed' by Government to actually manage the forest themselves. Government itself had not envisaged that level of 'participation', but whilst officials were dubious and continued to argue for a trade-off of certain [minor] use rights in return for promised 'cooperation', they did agree that the gazettelement process would be suspended pending demonstration by the villages that they could halt the degradation of the forest. It was informally agreed that they would have day-to-day management responsibility - and by implication, 'control' over how the forest would be managed.

With a degree of broad interpretation towards a carte blanche right to control, advisers and interested village leaders used this tentative go-ahead [*"we will have no one to blame but ourselves if we fail to save our forest"*], to launch a highly dynamic (and argumentative) process of reviewing each and every aspect of the forest to determine just what was

required to restore the forest and to keep it intact for potential future use. Simple but effective management plans were drawn up by each village, prominently including 'rules' for using the forest. A most interesting feature of this process was that, whilst prior to knowledge that they might control the forest themselves, villagers cited virtually all uses from timber to grazing as 'indispensable', once it was known that the forest is 'ours', the same leaders and ordinary villagers swiftly argued for discontinuation of any use which they considered damaging. Charcoal burning, tree felling and even grazing in some parts of their forests were immediately banned, and other uses to be controlled through regimes which verged upon the ultra-conservative and protectionist.

Village assemblies were held in which the entire community of each village debated and refined the 'plan'. Most of the eight villages were to adopt a management strategy based upon geographical and political divisions in the village, each registered sub-village looking after that part of the forest to which it was adjacent. Demarcation of those areas was undertaken, not always without dispute. The forest was also zoned in its entirety, indicating precisely where cattle could be grazed, which areas could not be used at all by the villagers, and which areas would be available for sustainable use (Sustainable Use Zones, Grazing Zones, Protection Zones).

From the outset, villagers considered that guarding of their discrete village forests against both non-villagers and offenders from within the village, would

be essential. *Walinzi*, or Village Forest Guards, were duly selected by each sub-village and patrolling and reporting regimes devised. These *Walinzi* patrol the forest up until the present.

Encroachment, pitsawing, charcoal burning and a range of lesser destructive activities have largely ceased and a main function of the *Walinzi* today is to prevent the forest being used by non-villager cattle, entering from adjacent villages, or using the forest as a conduit for long distance trekking of cattle to markets, or to and from other Districts.

Each village maintains a Village Forest Committee, the composition of which has steadily shifted from village leaders to ordinary villagers, a 'democratisation' at the local level which has both arisen from and led to a growing need for accountability as practical management and control gets under way. As the months pass, more, rather than fewer,

villagers are practically involved in the commitment to conserve and manage their forest.

Once villages began actively managing their forests (preventing activities they had declared illegal, issuing a limited number of permits for sustainable uses, patrolling, rehabilitating forest springs, etc), it became clear that they needed not just the administrative support they had secured from the local District Council, but legal backing. Accordingly each village was assisted to rephrase their management plans and rules as Village By-Laws. In mid 1995, these were formally approved under the District Authorities Act by the full District Council. Each village is thus by law, the legal authority and manager of that part of Duru-Haitemba Forest which is adjacent to its own settled village area and specified in the relevant Village By-Law as falling under their jurisdiction.

The Villages of Duru-Haitemba Forest

VILLAGES	AYA-SANDA	ENDA-NACHAN	HOSHAN	ENDAGWE	BURU	GIDAS	RIRODA	DURU	ALL
Number of Households (1994)	356	400	325	470	260	340	950	481	3,592
Entitled Village Area (Ha)	1,660	2,130	2,290	4,300	4,690	4,250	4,610	3,720	27,650
Est. % still forested	30	21	17	28	49	21	38	35	32
Est. Ha Village Forest Reserve	500	400	400	1,220	2,300	875	1,800	1,500	8,995
Est. Ha Forest/HH	1.4	1.1	1.2	2.6	8.8	2.6	1.8	2.7	2.4
No. Sub-villages	5	4	3	6	4	5	9	5	41
No. Sub-Villages with Forest	5	3	3	6	3	4	8	5	37
No. Wallra (Sept 1995)	10	4	6	12	14	12	34	15	106

Usual Categories of Village Forest 'Rules' (*Masharti*) that must be complied with by all village members*

Free Uses	<p><i>Matumizi Buru</i> Forest uses which may continue unimpeded because of their non-destructive nature: e.g: collection of dry fuelwood for cooking, wild fruits, mushrooms, grinding stones</p>
Notifiable Uses	<p><i>Kutoa Taarifa kwa Mwenyekiti wa Kitongoji</i> Forest uses which are to be reported to the Sub-Village Chairman (or Village Forest Committee Chairman) prior to implementation e.g: placement of new beehives, harvesting hives, collection of withles, medicinal plants for use outside the household</p>
Uses by Permit	<p><i>Kibali cha Maandishi</i> Forest uses which are rationed (quotas) or controlled through permits, some uses requiring a fee, others free; e.g: polewood collection, the use of fallen timber, collection of wood for beer-brewing, felling of a certain tree for strictly communal use (e.g. village school desks); or by season (collection of dry wood for brick burning); or by area (grazing zones)</p>
Banned Uses	<p><i>Matumizi Marufuku</i> Forest uses which are not permitted under an circumstances; e.g: charcoal burning, pitsawing, shifting cultivation or clearing, encroachment over boundaries, hunting, bark-stripping. * With the exception of one or two villages where members of neighbouring villages are able to keep hives, any forest use by a non-member of the village is generally forbidden.</p>

An important fact arose through the process of legal review; unlike many other countries, villages in Tanzania possess the capacity to be registered as the most local level of 'government' within the decentralised system, and in addition exist as legal corporate entities, able - *inter alia* - to sue and be sued and to own businesses and property as a community. Entitlement, the process of a community securing statutory ownership over their local land area, is a fundamental development policy and programme within Tanzania, although one which has in the event only slowly been implemented.⁶ It transpired that all eight villages in the vicinity of Duru-Haitemba had in fact applied for such ownership and that the areas they specified as their own and which were agreed as such, included their traditional woodland areas. Thus the legality of state gazettelement in the first place came into question. Village Title Deeds have since been awarded. Thus, both through statutory local government regulation and through statutory entitlement, the eight villages of Duru-Haitemba are in the unusual situation of being both the legal owners and managers of what they have come to call their **Village Forest Reserves** (*Hifadhi ya Msitu ya Kijiji*).

Since this event a year or more ago, there have been a series of related important developments both on the ground and as affecting wider forest management policy and practice in Tanzania.

Locally, the eight forest-managing villages have gone from strength to strength, gaining not only from experience but from the rigours of facing problems and having to solve them. They have done this with remarkably little supporting input from technical advisers or local District Forestry Officers, who face the normal transport constraints. Today, two years since they were given the chance to manage Duru-Haitemba themselves, they are proud of their efforts and the visible improvement in the condition of the forest [*"the bees have returned! soon we will be able to collect honey again"*].

The villagers have also, not surprisingly, been much-empowered by the process, and this has had an effect on the overall level of community involvement in village management and in natural resource management matters in particular. Thus, for example, grazing management even outside the Village Forests is firmly on the agenda in two cases and is leading slowly but surely towards stock reduction. Low-lying swamp-lands [*mbuga*] have become a follow-up target of attention in several villages, and important if difficult decisions have been made by the Village Forest Committees and Village Councillors as to how these must now be rehabilitated and protected for general village use [water and thatching grasses]. And where on-farm tree-planting was half-hearted in the past, and effected largely only in response to

⁶ A full discussion of the legal framework for village-based natural resource management and land tenure is provided in *Tic Law and the Village in Tanzania: An Exploration of the Legal Framework for Community Management of Natural Resources* Liz White, 1995, Orgut Consulting AB, Dar us Salaam.

constant nagging from officials, these same villagers cannot secure enough seeds and seedlings to meet their new-found needs, prompted by the consensus to limit timber and polewood extraction in the degraded upland woodlands until it has recovered. Water sources within and outside the forest have been rehabilitated and grazing in their vicinity forbidden.

On the socio-political side, there have been shifts in roles of village leaders and management committees with an overall demand that all activities carried out in the village, not only Village Forest Reserve management, be more directly accountable to the village community at large. Sub-village management has taken on a new, and practical lease of life, bringing decision-making even closer to the farming household. Sub-villages may include between 20 and 50 households. As noted above, significant shifts have taken place in the composition of managing committees to reflect this 'democratisation' within the village. Whilst the number of *Walinzi* has declined as the need for patrolling has declined, and there are fewer patrols per week, there has been remarkable stability in this volunteer cadre which serve the community, in return for exemption from other communal labour contributions (road and school building), and occasional 'rewards' when they apprehend offenders. All eight villages retain their original insistence that vigilance is core to their success and none propose to eliminate patrolling despite the decline in offences. Perhaps no better illustration of the urgency for Government to look to communities as forest guardians is

available than in the fact that these eight communities field around 100 Village Forest Guards in a forest which was previously 'managed' and 'guarded' by only two Government Forest Guards.

Mgori

Although the Duru-Haitemba initiative is a mere two years old, it is bearing fruit more widely, with the approach beginning to be replicated elsewhere - most prominently in Singida Region, where the vast Mgori Forest is now actively and successfully managed by the five adjacent communities. Like Duru-Haitemba villages, these five Mgori villages manage through the institution of Village Forest Committees, and similarly deploy village youth as patrolmen of their respective woodlands, whom are known as *Sungusungu* and who patrol in larger groups and in a more para-military fashion than the *Walinzi* of Duru-Haitemba, where the forest is less dense and less vulnerable to invasion. Again, clear rules for all to abide by, have been formulated by each community, and although government approval of these has proceeded through a slightly different route, they carry the force of Village By-Laws, uphold-able in any court in the land.

Unlike Duru-Haitemba, these villages do not yet have legal ownership of their respective parts of Mgori Forest which they have agreed among themselves and with government, as respectively their own 'Village Forest Reserves'. This is because those villages, although registered as legal entities, are yet to have their village areas surveyed,

demarcated and gazetted, a socio-spatial and legal framework within which those Village Forest Reserves will fall.

Even in that event, the five villages will continue to manage Mgori in close collaboration not only with each other but with the District Council, which has provided a full-time Mgori Forest Liaison Officer, and which will almost

certainly be manifest in a precisely-worded Joint Management Agreement between each village and (local) government.

The need for a more active collaboration between villages and government arises from the different circumstances of Mgori, which has been subject in the past and is still vulnerable to a range of

The Five Mgori Forest Villages

VILLAGE	Population	No. of Households	No. of Sub-Villages	No. of In-Forest Hamlets	No. of In-Forest Households
POHAMA	2,544	380	7	2	55
NGIMU	4,351	550	7	2	8
UNYAMPANDA	1,191	208	4	1	10
MUGHUUNGA	1,135	146	3	3	9
DUAMGHANGA	4,240	310	6	4	48
TOTAL	13,461	1,594	27	12	130

Mgori Village Forests (Woodlands) and Guards

VILLAGES	Est. Village Forest Area (Ha)	Est. Ha per Household	No Forest Patrol Groups	Total No Guards (Sungu-sungu)
POHAMA	13,000	34	7	49
NGIMU	3,000	5.4	7	42
UNYAMPANDA	4,000	19	4	12
MUGHUUNGU	7,500	51	5	21
DUAMGHANGA	13,500	43.5	6	42
TOTAL	41,000	25.7	29	166

complex and considerable incursions by outsiders. This includes illegal commercial timber extraction, illegal commercial wildlife hunting of the diverse fauna (including elephants), and the appeal the vast and remote area holds for bands of commercial shifting cultivators producing finger millet for the urban markets or clearing equally large swathes of forest for charcoal production. Moreover, Mgori Forest, sharing boundaries with two other Regions, continues to endure administrative boundary dispute with neighbouring Dodoma Region in particular.

There is also recognition that Mgori holds marked potential for regulated timber extraction in the future, and could also generate revenue from game viewing and some hunting. Local government is ready to concede management and even ownership of the resource to the traditional local community when the correct tenorial framework is in place, if only in recognition of government's own incapacity to manage and guard the vast forest - which, it might be noted, currently requires the patrolmen service of more than 160 *Sungusungu*. However, local government will, at the same time, want to secure agreements whereby significant revenue from the forest in the future is shared with the wider district community through taxation. All these conditions have led to close collaborative management by government and village, an arrangement within which the onus of control, responsibility and day to day effort, none-the-less falls fully to the forest-local communities.

Their respective village woodlands (future Village Forest Reserves, VFR) are extremely large; two of the five villages manage and gain from thicket and woodlands of more than 100 square kilometres, not all of which can be satisfactorily protected by the *Sungusungu* patrols. Two in-forest hamlets play a more continuous role in protecting the remoter corners from encroachment. This presents an interesting handling of the in-forest dweller issue that so frequently afflicts forest management; rather than evicting the forest dwellers from these two hamlets, as government had intended, the communities decided they should remain for the time-being, providing active forest protection support in return for permission to remain, and bound by several clear rules which forbid expansion of existing fields, introduction of livestock or new households. To date this has worked well, their role as guardians of the remote forest area indispensable in the face of continuing pressure from more over-crowded regions. The arrangement will, in due course, be reviewed as circumstances change.

Village-based management of Mgori is less than eighteen months old. Incursions and offences have been dramatically reduced in that period but do still occur; several of the villages have in fact earned considerable revenue through the levy of fines upon offenders, who include mainly outsiders from Dodoma Region helping themselves to the forest for commercial cultivation and charcoal burning. All five villages have established Forest Management Bank Accounts.

In two of the five villages, local leadership has been shaky and especially in one case, corrupt, and given the position of the corrupt leader as not only Village Chairman but elected Councillor of the area, this has posed a serious problem that is only slowly being resolved. Corruption did also arise initially in two of the Duru villages but in a more dilute form. Like those incidents, these events are prompting a strong move on the part of the village membership as a whole towards more accountable and less-leader driven and controlled systems of village forest management. In turn, participation in active decision-making by so-called 'ordinary villagers' is similarly growing, and with it, local commitment.

The Mgori initiative falls under the same SIDA-funded *Land Management Programme* mentioned above, and under the operations of that programme in the two Masai Districts of Arusha Region, ten or more Masai communities have begun to take control of their considerable and highly threatened

natural forests, following the same strategy they have seen in Duru-Haitemba and Mgori. Adoption of the process is occurring even further afield, partly through wide dissemination of reports but mainly through the steady stream of visits to especially Duru-Haitemba by foresters and project personnel from within Tanzania and from further afield. The opportunity to see if and how community-based forest management works on the ground, and recognition that what is seen is simple and common-sensical, low-cost and effective, is proving a small but powerful catalyst to change in this sector. Moreover, the strategy is reaching into the very heart of gazetted Forest Reserve management, in that following a review of management of some 100 large Reserves and familiarisation with the Duru and Mgori cases, senior forestry officers are looking more constructively to communities, not just as 'cooperative' parties, or even partners, but as actual managers of Forest Reserves, to be supported by their own technical advice.

Discussion

Making Change from Below and the Need to Try Out New Approaches on the Ground

After many years of East African governments hesitating on the brink of involving local forest users in natural forest conservation in more than consultative ways (see later), the Duru/Mgori experiences are significant not only in their own right but, as implied above, in the way they are playing a part in prompting a change more widely in natural forest management - and one that in salient respects goes further than is generally the case in the now well-known community forestry policies of South and South East Asian states, where devolution of control to communities has been in practice more hesitant and limited.⁷ It is as pertinent to note that this change has not come about through the importation of community forestry models from such areas, nor from the formulation and then implementation of new policies by central government; on the contrary, the movement has begun *at the village*, albeit with much facilitatory guidance and carried through with the support of involved local authorities increasingly convinced of the 'correctness' of the approach. This provides a potential basis of experiential pragmatism that is

rarely afforded new policy-making, quite aside from the considerable 'prompt' to action that the power of tangible example has been able to provide. Arguably, the experience of Duru and Mgori show that progress may only be made when some concrete attempts are made on the ground.

Process not Programme

This is doubly important because of the self-evident nature of community-based natural resource management as process rather than a finite programme. Already, after only two years, elements of the Duru and Mgori initiatives have changed, and are expected to continue to change, interspersed with plateaux in decision-making and practice. The very act of a community establishing its role is a process of trial and error, give and take, that finds its form and force only through implementation. A main part of the process is in the form of adjustments in socio-political relations, both in regard to its own constituency, the village community, and how representation and authority is internally delivered, and in terms of the outside world, which variously includes neighbouring villages which find themselves no longer free to use that area of forest as freely as they did in the past, local officialdom, and in particular, the government Foresters, the Primary

⁷ See for example, 'Grassroots Forest Protection: Eastern Indian Experiences' Poffenberger et al. [Asia Forestry Network Research Network Report No. 7 of 1996], and 'What Future for Community Forestry in Nepal?' Wily in ODA Social Development Newsletter, August 1995, both of which note the limitation of power-sharing and the constraints this poses to success in those areas.

Courts who find themselves in a new relationship with the villages as far as forest use matters are concerned, local politicians and even central government officials and 'experts'. There is additionally, inevitable shift in the manner of actual forest management practice that occurs, as consultation, decision-making and patrolling regimes refine in response to need. Overall, the trend in both Duru and Mgori has been towards a steadily more 'nuanced' management approach in terms of rules and management, and towards more locally-accountable decision-making and implementation.

Thus, in Duru-Haitemba, a main sphere of change has been in the detail and implementation of forest use rules, ranging from the minor additional requirement that women collecting dry fuelwood carry their own string to the forest to bind the head-load to limit the temptation to strip bark for that purpose, to a major change in grazing regulations in some of the villages - in several cases, the communities have ultimately found it necessary to ban forest grazing altogether, whilst in two others, the range of areas in which grazing may take place has been extended but the season during which this may take place, has been reduced. In two other villages, concern that polewood extraction was excessive led to the introduction of a quota system based on ranked needs and widespread adoption of a rule that only one branch may be taken from any one tree for this purpose.

In Mgori, one village has amended the rates of fines to penalise village leaders more harshly than others, and local

offenders as a whole, more harshly than outsiders. Another village has found it necessary to establish a Beehive Register to keep track of hive placement in the village forest. The same village now also requires hive-owners to report to the Committee prior to hive harvesting, and has let it be known that they will be held first-line accountable for any fires started in the forest during the period. In Mgori Forest (unlike Duru-Haitemba where ground cover is still poor), the risk of fire is considerable, and recently new measures, including controlled burning, have been introduced to reduce the risk - not yet, entirely successfully. Faced with continuing entry by young Barabaig elephant hunters from the north, one village in Mgori has initiated a series of 'good neighbourly' meetings with elders of those communities, initially using its own few Barabaig pastoralist householders as the go-between.

The five Mgori villages in general are tending to involve the local administration more and more as the means through which information about their management is disseminated to even quite distant villages, in order to widen co-operation. The Mgori Coordinating Committee of the five villages - an institution which the eight Duru villages have not yet seen the need to establish - has become steadily more influential in terms of ironing out local issues and in learning from and supporting each other, and in one case, bringing one village where conservation management was being undermined by a corrupt village leader, into line. In contrast, a main sphere of emerging consultation and cooperation on the part of the Duru-Haitemba villages is

with the local Primary Court, where Village Forest Committees are anxious that the Magistrate handles cases brought to him that are both consistent with their rules and do not undermine their authority.

All thirteen forest-managing villages have found it necessary, through trial and error and some heated disputes, to improve record-keeping and in particular financial accounting and accountability of fines levied, paid and used by the Village Forest Committees. And similarly, five of the thirteen villages have endured varying degrees of corruption on the part of key village leaders (usually Chairmen), resulting in widespread revision of decision-making procedures and controls towards greater accountability to the village as a whole, manifest mainly in the inclusion of more non-leaders in the operating Village Forest Committees; the establishment of Forest Management Bank Accounts distinct from the Village Council coffers, and so on. Needless to say the relationship of these committees with the elected village governments (Village Council) has in some cases arisen as a point of conflict and led to clarification of roles and rights of each body. This has been particularly important where Village Forest Committees have gradually taken on a function as a forum for discussion and decision-making on use and management of resources more generally in the village, not just in relation to the community's declared *Hifadhi* ('Forest Reserve').

Similarly, there have been adjustments not just in the numbers and patrolling regimes of the village forest guards, but in their own accountability, lines of

reporting, the way in which they handle offenders, and their remuneration - which generally remains at the level of percentage of whatever fine is collected and exemption from other communal tasks. There has been a recent demand by the Sungusungu of Mgori for Identity Cards to bolster their credibility and the procurement of boots from fine revenue to ease their duty. On the other hand, there has been extremely little change in the core group of persons serving as *Walizi* or *Sungusungu*, who in both forests demonstrate growing pride in their position as forest guardians. One village in Mgori is using the *Sungusungu* additionally as forest monitors, requiring them to report all game seen in the forest, building up a quite substantial record of patterns and change in this area.

Overall, the needs, problems and challenges at first faced by each village as it established management have changed, and will continue to change, as they individually move forward in their task. In due course, as their forests recover and as their capacity to permit and manage sustainable timber harvesting grows, a main item of their agenda will be devising sustainable, fair and accountable harvesting regimes.

The 'Ripple' Effect of Acting in One Sphere upon Other Spheres

As practitioners, the forest-managing villages have learnt to recognise and deal with problems, and for the most part do so increasingly ably, and with not so much less reference to government and other advisers

available, as with more precise requests for guidance or support. The point has been made earlier that a secondary effect of this growth in self-reliance and confidence has been an increase in capacity to make and follow-through on decisions, and a growth in confidence within the village more generally that it can, after all, manage its own affairs satisfactorily. As remarked upon earlier, this confidence combines with pride in their forest conservation and management achievements to date, and a heightened awareness of natural resource issues, to prompt attention to other issues of concern - issues which have usually lain unaddressed for a decade or more.

Foresters, not Policemen

Needless to say - and contrary to the fears of some forestry officials - the local Government Forester has also gained. In the first instance, the experience of both Duru-Haitemba and Mgori show that he is liberated from the exhaustion and failure of trying to protect forests under pressure, with inadequate resources, and in conflict with forest-local communities. Moreover, he has the chance - often for the first time in his long career - of being in a position to provide what he can provide best - technical guidance. Moreover, his experience and skills broaden; in both Forests the District Forestry staff have found themselves sought out by villages to advise on issues that they have not been in a position to advise upon before - even including a mediating role in certain disputes or problems which the actors have themselves found difficult to resolve, such as involving inter-village boundary disputes. More generally,

government Foresters enjoy a new-found respect and find themselves at the forefront of rural development; the delights of what in Nepal is routinely referred to as 'taking off the uniform' is as keenly experienced in this circumstance. Foresters also clearly appreciate the impact of these developments upon natural forest conservation; the Mgori Forest Liaison Officer, for example, frequently refers to the strategy as 'conservation, not reservation'. Certainly conventional wisdom that the establishment of government Forest Reserves is a prerequisite framework for conservation has lost currency in informed quarters.

Conflict and Collaboration

Change and process rarely occurs without the prompting of a problem or conflict, large or small, and this has proven to be the case in Duru-Haitemba and Mgori. Arguably, dynamic change is a chain of conflict and conflict resolution to one degree or another. Indeed, as this case study has shown, the very impetus of establishing community-based forest authority may arise out of a conflict between government and community in the first instance, and that relationship will almost certainly oscillate backwards and forwards from one of partnership and collaboration to one of constraint.

Thus Village Forest Committees in both Duru-Haitemba and Mgori have not only 'done battle' to some extent with administrations, and if not administrations, local law courts - both of which led to resolutions in the form of important decisions - they have faced conflicts with outsiders seeking to

exploit the village's resources through fair means or foul; with sectors of their own community who feel they have been deprived of a past advantage - losing, for example, the unbridled right to graze any number of stock in the forest, or to collect water from a now protected upland forest spring; and with individual village members who have deliberately ignored the 'Rules' - such as a renowned elephant ivory hunter resident in one of the Mgori villages, or a corrupt village leader, a local pit-sawer. In these circumstances, forums or frameworks for conflict resolution tend to evolve and consolidate around such needs.

The Need for Legal Backing, not just Administrative Support

Moreover, as the Duru-Haitemba Villages found very quickly, administrative support, such as was forthcoming from local government (Babati District Council) proved inadequate; it was not long before one offender queried in the local Primary Court the legality of the Village levying fines; it was this that led directly to the securing of village forest management 'Rules' as legally-bound Village By-Laws. In recent months, Village Forest Committees are finding themselves communicating directly with the local courts, informing the Magistrate of key decisions, who in turn has guided the Villages as to what kind of record-keeping of offences and offenders, and what system of receipting for payment of fines, he needs to see to support their case.

The need to clarify in law, all levels of rights and responsibilities grows more pressing as a village undertakes active management. This extends, as this case study shows, right into the heart of property rights and the existence of communities as legal entities. Reliance upon the goodwill of current officers has on at least two occasions proved illusory security. Given the newness of the approach, involved Villages and advisers are 'feeling their way' in this area, learning by trial and error - and in the process laying down a basis of experience and record upon which other communities, and other interested officials may proceed.

The Advantages of the Tanzanian Socio-Legal Environment

In this respect, the unique benefits of the socio-political evolution of rural land-tenure in Tanzania are brought into play. Unlike most sub-Saharan African states (or indeed most developing countries), rural communities exist in Tanzanian law not only as social formations, but as *legal persons*, with all the powers of a legal person or corporate entity. Moreover, as also touched upon earlier, the capacity of a rural community to own property as a legal person is not only available in legislation, but has long been a declared objective of the state, and with programmes and procedures well-established to promote this.⁹ The concept and legal construct to enable full legal ownership by communities is provided for in the Village Title Deed, recently confirmed in the new National Land Policy, as the

⁹ See footnote 6.

main vehicle for rural land security.⁹ Once awarded, this secures the same and equal rights of full private ownership by the community of the stated land area, attainable by individual entitlement.

Such a situation is far removed to the socio-legal situation in most other states, where rural communities exist only as open-ended social groups, and whose traditional communal landholding has not been transduced into modern law. Developments described in this case study have made full use of this unusual situation, and arguably, the level of progress that has been made in this case, owes much to the unusual situation in this regard in Tanzania.

By the same token, Tanzania has less excuse than many other states, not to proceed rapidly in this area; whilst other Forestry Departments may battle with the need to establish new socio-legal institutions to carry decentralised management strategies, in a very real sense, such an institution is already available in this East African state.

The Heart of the Matter: Empowerment not Participation

Those who have worked with the Duru-Haitemba and Mgori initiatives share a conviction that *meaningful* community participation has little to do with the dilute forms of community involvement which have for so long permeated natural resource management, and that sustainable natural forest utilisation

cannot be achieved at this level. Establishing buffer zones around forests to deflect forest use, promoting alternative sources of income to discourage forest product dependence, 'raising awareness' of villagers as to the biodiversity value of forests, establishing regulated Use Zones in which local people are 'permitted' to use one or other specified product in one or other specified way, to meet at least certain forest product 'needs', or the sharing of revenue earned by one arm or another of the state with local people - may be 'helpful' to forest conservation, and may secure, for a period at least, the passive *co-operation* of a forest-local community, and even their involvement in some practical management duties.

Ultimately however, such 'displacement', 'substitution', 'reward', or 'zoning' strategies are a circuitous and inadequate basis for sustainable success, for none of these strategies tackle the core issue, which is the separation and conflict between manager and user, state and community, and divergence in perception of rights. The more fundamental need is to remove forest management from the conflict in authority, to bring local communities into the management sphere in such a way that their vested interests as forest users is conjoined to the vested interests of responsible conservators. In short, the ideal situation is one in which the forest users are the forest managers, or, to put it another way, where the fundamental right of the traditional forest-local

⁹ Approved by the Cabinet of the Government, November 1994, revised by the Ministry of Lands, Housing and Urban Development, June 1995, and to be presented to Parliament late 1996.

community - not so much to use the forest as to determine how it shall be used and conserved - is central to the management process. Only with this right, with this power-sharing, will derive the responsibility that is currently missing in a situation where local people use the forest at the whim of another authority, generally 'the state'.

Thus, the key, first and prime task is simply to address the issue of control and authority and to restructure these to provide the most fundamental of incentives for full and proper guardianship - the right to make decisions and to be responsible for the consequences. This of course requires a degree of 'letting go' on the part of Governments, long used to regarding forest-local communities as the enemy and the cause of degradation, and whilst willing to 'work with' the people, rarely willing to take the critical step of sharing or devolving power.

Where this case study has made unusual progress is that it has been able to show the advantages of doing precisely this, even to the extent of acknowledging the ownership of the forest in the hands of local user communities - and it has been able to show the gains made by Government itself in securing a new relationship with the very people against whom it thought it had to protect the forest. In this way, the forest management moves out of conflict, and the way is free to move forward. As one villager observed when queried as to the

intense seriousness of the village in its conservation effort:

Of course we stopped the encroachment and charcoal burning when we were given the forest to look after for ourselves! Now it is ours, we only have ourselves to blame if the forest gets used up. That is why you find us serious.

The Issue of Open Access

An underlying fear of many officials is that a shift in the locus of control towards communities is synonymous with a shift into a situation of free-loader open access, with all the chaos and degradation these imply. It is ironical that it is, on the contrary, state forest management that today represents the very kind of open access dangers that many so rightly fear. As suggested above, a common operating principle today is arguably 'if it's Government's it is there to use and abuse' and this includes even the most protected of national Forest Reserves.

Moreover, this case study shows quite clearly that a shift in the locus of control to a community is not a shift towards open access, but a shift towards a much more closed property regime, than the diffuse and vaguely-located responsibility of Government tenure can possibly generate. In fact, in the case study, decentralisation of management has not been far removed from a process of privatisation, but in this case, towards communal private property, which, it has been explained, is an unusually well-developed construct in Tanzania.

Understanding the Basis of Stake-holding

Much emphasis has been given above to the question of authority and control and a further comment on this is offered. One of the salient shifts in forest management thinking over the last decade has been growing awareness of the value of forests to local people and the extent to which local socio-economics depend upon forest product utilisation. From a situation in which there was under-attention to use values, the sector has, however, moved rapidly to a sometimes mis-placed assumption that forest-local communities are only interested in conserving a forest for as long as they are able to get products from it. It is therefore frequently concluded that firstly, only a community which has direct economic dependence upon a forest will have the incentive to be involved in management, and secondly, that unless their use needs can be met, the community will not have any incentive to be involved. Accordingly, most initiatives seeking to involve communities, do so solely on this basis and in the process proscribe the level of local responsibility attainable.

This case study suggests however, that stake-holding is potentially more nuanced than such economic determinism suggests. This was made clear when, as observed earlier, prior to attaining rights to control forest use themselves, the Duru-Haitemba villagers consistently claimed that they would not be able to survive without burning charcoal in the forest, felling timber for sale, etc - all forest uses which they promptly eschewed as

'damaging' when they themselves, rather than government, became the owner-managers.

What this experience suggests is that forest use values may undergo significant shifts as the political relations of the community to the forest changes. To some extent at least, forest utilisation is 'a moveable feast'. A user community may forego use of a certain product if it conflicts with a superior stake-holding - such as attaining the right to control how the forest is used or even to own the resource. These rights are superior to attaining simple use rights, and as such a more effective basis of conservation management. They enable a community to take a longer-term view of the forest resource, removing the pressure to 'get what it can from the forest as fast as possible'. Longer-term conservation and catchment functions of the forest can be considered. It is the conclusion of this area, that for these and related practicalities of management, recognition of forest-local communities as owners of the resource may well represent the optimal framework upon which to negotiate sound management. It is also concluded that over-attention to (current) local forest use is an imperfect basis for negotiating the cooperation of the forest-local community and may indeed unnecessarily proscribe it.

Applicability

Duru-Haitemba and Mgori are both dry miombo woodlands with no special biodiversity or endemism. It has been opined by some observers that the extent of community involvement now existing there, could not, or should not

be attempted in areas of high biodiversity value, or where population pressure is extremely high, such as in the case of Bwindi and Mgahinga Forests in southwestern Uganda, Mount Meru and Kilimanjaro Forest Reserves in Tanzania, or Mount Kenya and Kakamega Forests in Kenya. Others are concerned that community-based management should only be promoted in relation to public land forests, not 'valuable' Forest Reserves.

Such opinions miss the point of the principles that these initiatives embody; that successful forest management has less to do with the forest itself than to do with the locus of authority and the need to vest it in the entity which has most chance and incentive to be effective.

As community-based forest management in the Indian sub-continent amply illustrates, extreme pressure upon a forest resource by forest-local populations of a density that no African state may compare, may actually serve as the catalyst, and also the watchdog upon fair practice and active control of utilisation. It is arguably the case that the greater the pressure, the greater the need for the community to devise workable and accountable regimes of management, and the greater the vigilance over these by individual members, ever-watchful of maldistribution of limited rights.

In the case of those forests of high biodiversity value, such as is commonly the case with moist montane, island forests in sub-Saharan Africa, the same principle applies. If they are so valuable, then, in this author's view, it is even

more important that they are conserved and managed wisely and in a sustainable manner. For as long as forest-adjacent communities are not directly involved in that process, their guardianship of the Forest - such as in the natural role they play as a buffer to illegal use by outsiders - is not provoked and harnessed. This is nowhere more apparent than in those Forests where governments currently deploy unusual numbers of Guards and invest unusually heavily - but are still rewarded with continuing abuse and degradation - and all the while, the forest-adjacent community stands passively by, knowing very well precisely who is illegally felling the forest, when and how, but lacking the incentive to do anything about it. Indeed, their deliberate exclusion and denial of rights in relation to the same forest may induce them to support such incursions, and contribute to the degradation themselves.

No Process or Strategy is Entirely Failsafe

A final cautionary word is offered; despite the progress and hopes, the process of facilitating community-based natural forest management is clearly not inviolable. It may be corrupted on the one hand, or diluted through ever-accelerating replication, on the other. In the cases provided, it has not been uncommon at some point or another, for one or two more powerful individuals to attempt to reconstruct control of the forest to their own ends. In the event, villagers themselves have so far shown themselves able to deal with these problems. The need for forest managing

villages to construct systems for accountability at the most local and democratic level within the village is one of many early lessons of the initiatives described.

Danger also lies in the tendency of enthusiastic Foresters, anxious to move forward as quickly as possible, to slide away from facilitation back to the directive modes of their traditional relations with village. At one point a keen Forester in another District, who had visited Duru-Haitemba returned hurriedly to his own District and 'ordered' a village to take over full responsibility for a Forest that he had himself previously directly managed with his staff on behalf of Government.

Top-down approaches are integral to officialdom, and often to the 'keen' aid worker, but need to be avoided, for as day-to-day management in both Duru-

Haitemba and Mgori repeatedly suggest, the power of a decision is directly proportionate to the extent to which it derived from the community itself. The two initiatives represent this principle as a whole. This is not to say that the aid worker or official need be passive; on the contrary, it is unproductive for such persons not to act as catalysts to change. Again, in the words of a villager:

It never occurred to us that Government might give us back our forest. But when you suggested it, we couldn't get that idea out of our minds and since then we have not looked back.

Those words embody the two faces of the approach; if the establishment of successful community involvement in forest management ultimately means empowerment, so also does it mean governments learning 'to let go'?

Community Forestry: It may indeed be a new management tool, but is it accessible? Two case studies in Eastern Cameroon.

The aim of the study was to determine the rules on resource use and appropriation. This fits in with the overall issue of defining roles and finding ways to involve the local people more closely in the process of managing their living space and the natural resources within it. After having selected two sites from about 140 villages over a project area of more than one million hectares in Eastern Cameroon, the process of awareness raising began, making it possible to gradually develop the study. The method used can be summed up as a series of nine stages, of which four are vital.

In one village, matters were taken further as the population wanted to get involved in setting up a community forest. The applicability of this management tool, arising from the new forestry law of January 1994, was tested in the field within the framework of the objectives of the Dimako API project. Here again, the method used was based on a period of awareness raising and information of adequate length to reach a level of consensus close to unanimity regarding all decisions to be taken by the community. Analysis of the situation highlights the difficulties involved in applying the current legislation relating to land allocation in general and community forests in particular.

Finally, in its conclusion, the study puts forward a number of theoretical scenarios. These alternatives should provoke further thinking about the ways and means of involving local people to a greater extent in the process of natural resource management.

IIED's Forestry and Land Use Programme

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