

COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION IN FOREST MANAGEMENT
A CASE STUDY OF NTUGI HILL
THARAKA NITHI COUNTY



NAME: MATTI ELOSY KARITHI
CONTACTS: 0718739764
EMAIL: elosymatt@gmail.com
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ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

CBFM: Community Based Forest Management

CBNRM: Community Based Natural Resource Management

CBO: Community Based Organization

CF: Community Forestry

CFA: Community Forest Associations

FGD: Focus Group Discussion

IFMP: Integrated Forest Management Project

ICE: Institute of Culture and Ecology

ILO: International Labour Organization

KFS: Kenya Forest Service

NRM: Natural Resource Management

PFM: Participatory Forest Management

SFM: Sustainable Forest Management

DEDICATION

This research project is dedicated to my mum, husband ,cousin (Pamela) who has always been with my daughter for care and protection during my study, my daughter Joan and Elijah Kamau of the Institute of Culture and Ecology(ICE) for being my mentor throughout my learning process.

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CHAPTER ONE

1.0 INTRODUCTION

This research is an assessment of Community Participation in Ntugi Hill forest. Ntugi Hill is located in Tharaka Nithi County, Tharaka South Sub-County, and 8 Kms off Chiakariga –Marimanti Road. Ntugi is gazetted as a governmental forest hill and currently under the control and management of Kenya Forest Service (KFS) to manage the natural resources on the hill.

Key challenges facing forests in the locality are illegal logging, charcoal burning, and illegal farming practices, encroachment and climate change. Community involvement in natural forest resource management has not been seen for a long time in the study area. This has led to the loss of natural forest resources, which in the long-term lead to adverse environmental challenges such as climate change, water scarcity, and land and soil degradation. The main objective of this study is to establish how Participatory Forest Management (PFM) could be used in the sustainable management of natural forest resources in Ntugi Hill Forest. Purposive sampling during the research entailed selection of sample key informants and selected groups such as community leaders, forest user groups, youth leaders and communities living adjacent to the Ntugi Hill Forest.

Community Forest Management (CFM) can be carried out in 3 phases namely: Community identification of suitable forest areas and forming community forest committees, demarcation of the community forest and developing a management plan and being granted ownership and exclusive commercial rights based on annual plans through signing of community forest management agreements.

1.1 BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

According to Willy (2002), Participatory Forest Management (PFM) is being adopted widely in many developing countries as an alternative method of managing forestry resources. PFM is increasingly being used as an approach through which to achieve the sustainability of threatened forests and conservation of biodiversity. This is done through a process of inclusion, equity and democratization of the governance of the forest resources (Amanor, 2003).

According to (ILO 2000), promoting public participation has become an issue of growing importance in worldwide forestry policies. In Kenya, Participatory Forest Management (PFM) is a relatively new concept that has been as a result

of the government recognition of the critical role to be played by forest adjacent communities in ensuring that tree cover in the country increases from the current 2% to the recommended 10% (Menr, 2007). This stemmed from the pressing need not only to increase forest cover but to also reduce forest destruction. The Forest Act (2005) was passed which applies Participatory Forest Management (PFM) principles to all public, private, and local authority forests and this has been a tremendous achievement for the local communities (Ongugo et al, 2007).

Different motivations dominated in different countries towards forest management. In Nepal and India community forestry programs were initially conceived to reverse degradation of national forests, which could not be managed and protected effectively by state forestry services (Springate-Baginski et al 2003; Khare et al 2000). This was also one of the motivations for the establishment of the first village-owned forest reserves in Tanzania (and perhaps in Africa), described by Wily (1995). Rural poverty alleviation was a further motivation behind Leasehold Forestry in Nepal and Joint Forest Management in India (Thoms et al, 2003; Khare et al, 2000). Increasing local communities' involvement in forest management has in many cases been associated with governmental decentralization programs, such as in Honduras and Bolivia where responsibility for forest management, and for increasing local people's involvement in it, has been devolved to municipal levels.

1.2 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

'Forests 'have been identified as one of the most important national assets. They have crucial services and products such as conserving biological diversity, water, soil, and habitat for wildlife, air purification, timber, firewood, fruits, vegetables, and fodder for livestock. They supply these services and products to individuals, communities, and private sector and earn the government revenue tax. The rate at which natural forest resources are being harvested is unsustainable markedly in recent years. This is largely due to the increase in the local population, increasing poverty levels, ignorance, and poor policy enforcements. At Ntugi Hill, natural forest resources are declining at a high rate.

1.3 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The objectives of the research were: i) Assess forest resources used by the communities neighbouring Ntugi Hill Forest and develop sustainable extraction strategies based on the assessment, ii) Identify activities, benefits and challenges of community participation in forest management and iii) Find out

why Participatory Forest Management (PFM) is the best tool for Natural Resource Management (NRM) to achieve sustainability at Ntugi Hill Forest. The assumptions made in the course of the research were: i) Community participation in natural forest management has been left out due to political interference in forest management, ii) Participatory Forest Management (PFM) is the best tool for sustainable natural forest management and iii) Poverty levels of community living adjacent to Ntugi Hill has led to forest degradation and destruction.

1.3.1 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The research aimed at answering the following questions:

- i). What activities, benefits and challenges are encountered by community participation in management of Ntugi hill forest?
- ii). What is the forest resource used by community neighbouring Ntugi hill forest and what are the possible sustainable extraction strategies?
- iii). How will Participatory Forest Management (PFM) help in sustainability of Ntugi Hill Forest natural resource management?

1.4 CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

This framework presumed that community participation was critical in sustainable management of forest resources. The community was involved in decision making processes, conservation and protection activities in the forest. This enhanced the community to own and have positive attitudes towards its maintenance and conservation practices.

1.5 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

After the research study, the results will be used to establish Community Forest User Groups, which will assist in enhancing correct use of forest resources. There is also equitable sharing of forest resources hence managing conflicts and problems that arise over natural resources. The community members are involved in forest management hence empowering them to realize their conservational roles, their importance in decision making processes, implementation of forest policies and acceptance of forest policies and regulations, as forest user groups. The study also identified some of income generating activities that the community members had in place to help in poverty alleviation and better their living standards. This was successful through collection of data from key informants such as forest officers,

community leaders, community Based Organization (CBO) leaders and community members living adjacent to the Ntugi Hill Forest.

CHAPTER TWO

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

This section will look at forest management from various local and regional perspectives and challenges facing forest management in Ntugi Hill Forest.

2.1 ENVIRONMENTAL DEGRADATION AND COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION

Forests play a central role in economic development, provision of critical environmental services and the supply of social cultural values. They are also vital since they play a role with respect to wood based industries, provision of energy, stabilization of underground water, tourism through their unique environments and habitats, provision of resource materials to pharmaceutical industry and livestock production through feeds.

Forests have a stabilizing role to the environment as evidenced by their ability to absorb carbon, biodiversity conservation, flood control and amelioration of climate. On a social dimension, forests are very important to the communities as they are used for religious purposes and are home to traditional forests dwellers.

2.2 REGIONAL PERSPECTIVES ON FOREST MANAGEMENT

Forest management is a problem not only in Kenya but also in other parts of Africa, Asia and Europe. Sri-Lanka for instance had a tropical forest cover of 6,500 km², in 1999 the total estimated canopy was 22% of the total land area. Annual forest loss in the country between 1990 – 2005 is estimated at 1.3% mainly due to shifting of land cultivation, illegal exploitation of timber and damage from periodic wildfires.

Ethiopia has 13 million hectares of forest. Currently, forest cover in the country is under threat as a result of pressure from agricultural expansion and fuel wood production. To address this, the government issued a Forest Development, Conservation and Utilization Proclamation and this proclamation recognized the role of community forest management as an important strategy for environmental protection.

Mozambique has a forest area of just over 19 million hectares and a deforestation rate that has risen in years to approximately 219,000 hectares per year. Mozambique is exploring new prospects for community forest management.

2.3 LOCAL PERSPECTIVES ON FOREST MANAGEMENT

Within the Kenyan context, the first site for Participatory Forest Management (PFM) was established in Arubuko Sokoke Forest in Coast region. Forest management in Kenya has undergone several changes overtime in response to the country's changing needs. The most significant, though gradual, has been the introduction of Participatory Forest Management (PFM), a shift from the previous command and control system that alienated communities.



Community based tree nurseries in Ntugi Hill as part of community forest management

The Forests Act (2005) is therefore a positive move for the local communities and this has already begun to

act as a catalyst in their involvement in the management of the remaining forest resources (Ongugo et al. 2007).

The Act further encourages local communities to participate in the management of forest resources adjacent to them.

Arising from this policy and law, new institutions are emerging to implement the process of involving local communities in the management of forest resources.



Community forest management meetings in Tharaka Nithi

CHAPTER THREE

3.0 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The methodology used during the research included interviews, administering questionnaires, Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) and observation. The researcher used primary and secondary data collection methods. The primary sources of data were community members in Ntugi Hill, Ndunduni Self Help Group members and staff members at the Institute of Culture and Ecology (ICE) and Africa Biodiversity Network (ABN). Secondary sources of data used during the study were books, papers presented on environmental issues and Internet search.

3.1 DATA COLLECTION METHODS

Data collection methods utilized during the study were:

3.1.1 QUESTIONNAIRES

Open ended and closed questionnaires were used and administered to selected households living near Ntugi Hill forests .The respondents included farmers (pastoralists and agrarian), staff members of organizations within Ntugi Hill area and Forestry department staffs. The questionnaires sought to assess the benefits and constraints of community participation in local forest management.

3.1.2 OBSERVATION

The researcher observed the community engage in various activities that impact on the forest including settlements and what the community does to restore the degraded forest including constraints to community participation.

3.1.3 DISCUSSION GUIDE

Focus Group Discussions were held with members of Institute of Culture and Ecology (ICE) and Ndunduni Self Help Group to generate qualitative information on participation in forest management including strategies used to enhance community participation.

3.2 DATA ANALYSIS AND PRESENTATION

To analyze data gathered from the field, descriptive and qualitative methods were used. Data was analyzed at individual level, faculty member's level, community level and at peer level. The researcher-analyzed data on her own at the individual level, this was then presented to the community for additional

comments. Fellows as peers in the learning programme also offered insights into the study as well as faculty members to improve on what had been presented.

CHAPTER FOUR

4.0 DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Based on the research the following findings were made:

Various challenges face the community with regard to environmental protection. These include lack of cooperation among the different organized environmental groups, inadequate funds to run the group's activities, poor infrastructure including poor road and communication networks, political interference through vested interests in extraction of forest resources, the effects of climate change, poor communication network, forest fires and their effects on biodiversity, destruction of seedlings by wild animals and human-wildlife conflict.

Factors that hinder community participation in forest management include lack of involvement in forest management. Among (90%) of respondents, lack of participation was cited as due to poverty, lack of secure tenure of forests and absence of environmental committees. The researcher also found out that women participate more in forest management than men because the latter works away from home.

The researcher further observed that, women are main users of the resources and the first casualties of environment degradation as they are the ones who deal with the natural resources most of the time e.g. fetching water, wood fuel, food and building material although in most of the cases men have been identified to use the hill for economic purposes i.e. illegal tree cutting for charcoal production, timber, electrical posts and wood carvings. If these resources are increasingly inaccessible it threatens community's livelihood and affects their welfare and that of their families.

The researcher observed that the community is not involved in forest management because of poor leadership. Local leaders who represent the community in forest management are of no help and some are corrupt and incompetent on forest management issues. In addition, poverty in the area has resulted to community members being pre-occupied with their immediate survival hence no time for environmental protection. Some households cannot even take their children to school. This has led to over reliance on forest resources for firewood, building materials, illegal tree logging for charcoal production and woodcarvings. Poor farming methods were also observed to be contributing to environmental degradation in Ntugi Hill.

The research study found out that community members have no access to participatory processes, although some are interested, they are unable to participate due to lack of means/spaces for presenting their views. Furthermore, exploitation of timber through charcoal burning and for purposes of construction leads to a looming threat of environmental degradation.

The locals also cut down trees for construction of their own houses, where they cut young and immature trees and shrubs for thatching. Most of the community members rely on firewood as their main source of firewood thus the hill is facing looming threats. From the research it was noted that these farmers do not plant seedling in return to ensure continued survival of the hill forest that leading to deforestation. There is also unregulated tree harvesting, as the locals' have no woodlots in their farms.

CHAPTER FIVE

5.0 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 CONCLUSIONS

Participatory Forest Management (PFM) is the most natural way of going about conservation and protection of the forest resources. Community forestry can work if the key people involved have integrity that is they are not corrupt and involved in illegal practices. Public awareness has to be created and the local people have to be involved in all the stages of community forestry development. From the research results it can be concluded that if both the relevant institutions and local community recognized that each party is a stakeholder in ensuring the continuity and maintenances of the forests for their benefits and working together in partnership a lot would be accomplished. The local community has been left out far too long and is more than willing to collaborate with the institutions to conserve and protect Ntugi Hill.

To ensure success in the battle against deforestation and environmental degradation and the success on sustainable management of indigenous forest projects, community forestry has to be greatly emphasized. Technical recommendations can be successfully implemented only if the community is at the centre of the process and if the process is relevant to the community's overall development.

5.2 RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the major findings of this study the following recommendations were proposed:

5.2.1 Collective environmental conservation

Environmental conservation and protection should involve many stakeholders as possible including government departments, agencies, state and non-state actors. The environment management committees should do Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) of environmental protection work at the village, sub-location and location levels.

5.2.2 Networking

Community, national, sub-regional and regional forestry networks should be established and strengthened to facilitate information exchange and cross border exchange visits between communities and institutions.

5.5.3 Capacity building and campaigns

Capacity building and strengthening programmes should be organized for both state and non-state actors on environmental issues. Media campaigns should also be used as avenues for informing the local people on importance of forests.

5.5.4 Policy formulation and popular education

Friendly policies that are inclusive and participatory must be formulated for easier implementation of participatory forest management plan. Female participation in policy processes should be emphasized .In addition, environmental education should be introduced in school curricular to enable access to fundamental knowledge on environment and improve attitudes towards environment.

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