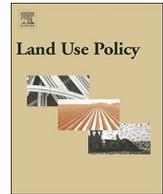




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Learning from the other: Benefit sharing lessons for REDD + implementation based on CBFM experience in Northern Tanzania

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ABSTRACT

A key challenge facing interventions in forestry sector is how to ensure that benefit-sharing arrangements meet the needs and aspirations of poor rural people. In particular, as interest and effort builds around REDD +, it is important to remember that it, and any other intervention, are likely to be shaped by the history of Tanzania's forestry sector, especially community based forest management. This paper examines benefit lessons for REDD + from a well-known Tanzanian Forest Reserve which has begun to participate in selling carbon. The example is particularly important as it is one of the oldest cases of village-based forest management in the country. To explore this case a total of 101 households from two reserve-adjacent villages were randomly interviewed along with key informant interviews, transect walks, participant observation, and focus group discussions. Findings of the study revealed that majority of respondents felt benefits are concentrated on an elite due to weak governance mechanisms. We argue that local governance and central oversight will enhance good benefit sharing under REDD + and future interventions in the forest sector.

1. Introduction

In the last twenty-five years there have been two transformations of the forestry sector in Africa. The first has seen reforms that have brought in participatory forest management, devolved governance and co-management of state owned forest and the formation of village-owned, managed and run forest reserves (Wily 1997; Ribot 2002). The second, which is still on going, is a nascent revolution of purpose and funding which sees forests and trees transformed into carbon and carbon credits (Angelsen, 2009).

The first change is, potentially, emancipatory because it sought to empower the forest-dwelling rural poor and forest dwellers. It followed from the transformation in participatory forest management in India which, while flawed and problematic in many ways, was nonetheless a fundamental change from the centralised, command and control system of previous eras (Poffenberger 1990). It allowed for closer co-operation between villagers and forest officials and greater sharing of benefits of forests, as well as being credited with halting the decline of forest cover in the country. Participatory forestry has been attempted in the last twenty years in Tanzania, with a recent evaluation finding that, in the absence of urban demand for wood and charcoal, and if the forests are large enough, then this form of management can result in sustainable

use (Treue et al., 2014).

However, it is important to consider how the second revolution, the advent of carbon sequestration and REDD +, will affect the first. Will it strengthen local power, or stymie it? The literature is both optimistic and pessimistic. Some scholars note that schemes such as REDD + have the potential to provide additional incentives to Community Based Forest Management (CBFM) and it can help to reward communities for the costs they incur in management of their forest (Blomley, 2008). Other scholars feel that payments for carbon sequestration also have the potential to be associated with more regressive and oppressive tendencies. Agrawal and colleagues have warned that 'climate change impacts will strengthen governance trends (especially in the direction of concessions and certification), increase the involvement of market actors in forest governance, and create pressures toward greater formalization as governments seek to take advantage of emerging carbon funds' (Agrawal et al., 2008: 1462). In particular they note that 'it can potentially reverse contemporary trends in favour of the involvement of civil society actors and communities, instead promoting greater privatization' (Agrawal et al., 2008). Most recently, studies focusing on Tanzania have warned that REDD + could accelerate land conflicts at the local level (Scheba and Rakotonarivo, 2016) and sustained elite capture by members of the donor community, civil society, policy

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makers and academia (Lund et al., 2017).

But participatory forestry is never *merely* a good force empowering the poor. Rather, community-based natural resource management is likely to consist, as Brockington wrote ‘community conservation is likely to consist of a myriad of marginalisations and inequalities enforced on smaller and smaller scales’ (Brockington 2004: 428). Inequitable distributions of costs and benefits, and unjust procedures for determining them can be determined at the village level. Oppression can be locally driven and organized.

It is thus a common critique of CBFM that new initiatives can serve to reinforce existing power hierarchies and inequalities in communities rather than bring about equitable sharing of social and economic benefits associated with forest resources (Brosius et al., 2005). The issue of unequal sharing of benefits has been acknowledged in various CBFM initiatives across the world. A central component of Ribot’s extensive work on decentralisation and natural resource management is that devolution is so often incomplete because it is captured by local elites or organisations which are not downwardly accountable (Ribot 2004; Ribot 2006; Ribot 2009). Studies of community forest management and devolution policies in India and Philippines found that these policies provided more benefits to some forest users, such as better access to forest products for subsistence and income generation but that most of these benefits were captured by local elites and non-local residents, and rarely by the poorest and most marginalized forest users (Edmunds and Wollenberg, 2003; Saito-Jensen et al., 2010). And in Tanzania research to date suggests that unless CBFM deliberately targets poorer community members, they likely could receive insignificant benefits from forest management efforts, and could even be negatively affected as a result of REDD+ forest related activities (Blomley and Iddi 2009; Green and Lund 2015).

The purpose of this paper is two-fold. Its primary goal is to explore how the exigencies of carbon forestry interact with the needs and demands of community-based natural resource management. It asks: how do these affect the politics of community forestry and participation? What new pressures do they bring, and how are these resolved? Its secondary purpose is to provide an update on developments in one of the oldest village-based forest reserves in Tanzania. For most of the research carried out here was undertaken in the Duru-Haitemba Villages Land Forest Reserve (henceforth DHVLF), in central Tanzania. This reserve is significant because it was largely as a result of developments here that the momentum behind participatory forest management gathered in Tanzania, as Liz Wily’s work documents extensively (Wily, 2001a,b; Wily et al., 2000; Wily and Dewees 2001). It is also important because it updates an older debate about the consequences of CBFM in Tanzania centered precisely on these forests. Wily portrayed the changes in glowing terms, as a move that was participatory, devolved, effective just and widely welcomed and that built on years of local village based government. Brockington questioned Wily’s interpretations based on well-known flaws in the capabilities of village governments in Tanzania, but without being able to examine actual performance in these villages (Brockington 2007). Now more data are available as to the actual performance of village-based forest management in Duru-Haitemba that can take this debate forward. We use therefore the fieldwork reported here, and the opportunities posed by carbon forestry, to provide an update on that debate.

The paper proceeds as follows. We first provide a brief introduction to forestry, forest cover change, forest legislation and REDD+ in Tanzania, and some background to the study site. Then we present our methods and results before examining their significance. Our argument is that governance arrangements indeed improved under the devolved forest management regimes that were established in the 1990s. However, partly as a result of their success, old problems of local elite capture are now resurfacing, and the oversight of high levels of government do not suffice to control them. The implication of adding carbon payments to this arrangement is uncertain. It could increase the rewards for elite capture, or it might raise local dissatisfaction and

resistance to elite capture. It does make clear the importance of bolstering mechanisms of oversight as REDD+ unfolds.

1.1. Forests, forest management and REDD+ in Tanzania

According to the National Forest Resources Monitoring and Assessment (URT, 2015), forest land in mainland Tanzania covers 48.1 million ha, about 54.4% of Tanzania’s total land area of 88.3 million ha. Recent data indicate Tanzania’s annual deforestation rate stood at 372,816 ha for forest and 248,871 ha for woodlands between 1995 and 2010 respectively (Brockington 2007).

On a more positive note, there is an interesting history of Participatory Forest Management (PFM). PFM was introduced in Tanzania in the early 1990’s as a result of collaboration between the government, development partners and international and national NGOs. The introduction came after the realization that forests in Tanzania were managed without full participation of local communities and other relevant stakeholders living around forest resources. It was projected that local communities will play a significant role in managing forests and their participation was viewed as a game changer in forest management (Meghji, 2003). According to official government estimates, PFM covered 7.5 million hectares of forest in 77 districts and 2285 villages by 2012 (URT, 2012). This includes, CBFM which cover around 1233 villages occupying 2.4 million ha and 1052 villages are under JFM which covers 5.4 million ha of forested land (ibid). While PFM appears to be a ‘success story’, critics have recently questioned the reliability of official PFM data and warned of the danger of politicizing PFM statistics to justify a success story in the forest sector. They also argue that the enthusiasms around PFM has declined in recent years with a number of donors pulling out (Lund et al., 2017).

Carbon forestry has a more recent history. REDD+ was launched in Tanzania in 2009 after the country received funding from the Norwegian government in 2008 to support national REDD+ framework and initial eight pilot projects. The pilot projects were managed under collaboration of various actors including forest dependent communities, international and local NGOs, government agencies and academic institutions (URT, 2010). While the pilots had some level of success in terms of expanding areas under CBFM, village land use planning, carbon monitoring technologies and testing of carbon payment modalities, many projects failed to achieve their core objectives and substantial portion of the funding was used for administrative and consultancy expenses (Lund et al., 2017).

The K:TGAL (Kyoto: Think Global Act Local Project)¹ pilot carbon payment scheme was operational between 2005 and 2008 even before REDD+ started. The project demonstrated trial carbon payments in community-owned forests in four villages in different parts of Tanzania (Zahabu, 2008). Ayasanda which is one of the villages under this study was part of the pilot scheme under K:TGAL. It received a sum of 2,550,667 Tsh (about \$1750 by the exchange rates of the day) after selling over 1300 tons of carbon from their village forest reserve. According to the interviews with the village chairman and other informed villagers,² the villagers reached a unanimous decision to spend the money to finance construction of a new primary school in Haitemba sub-village. It is this context – of both carbon payments and long history of participatory forest management that make this such an apposite case study.

¹ The K:TGAL project (2003–2008) was funded by Netherlands Development Cooperation to investigate the possibilities for community forest management of existing natural forests to be included as an eligible carbon mitigation activity under international climate change agreements. Ayasanda and three other villages in Tanzania were selected to participate in the pilot project. The funds were given to the village governments in respective villages.

² Key informant interviews with village chairman and villagers- Ayasanda.

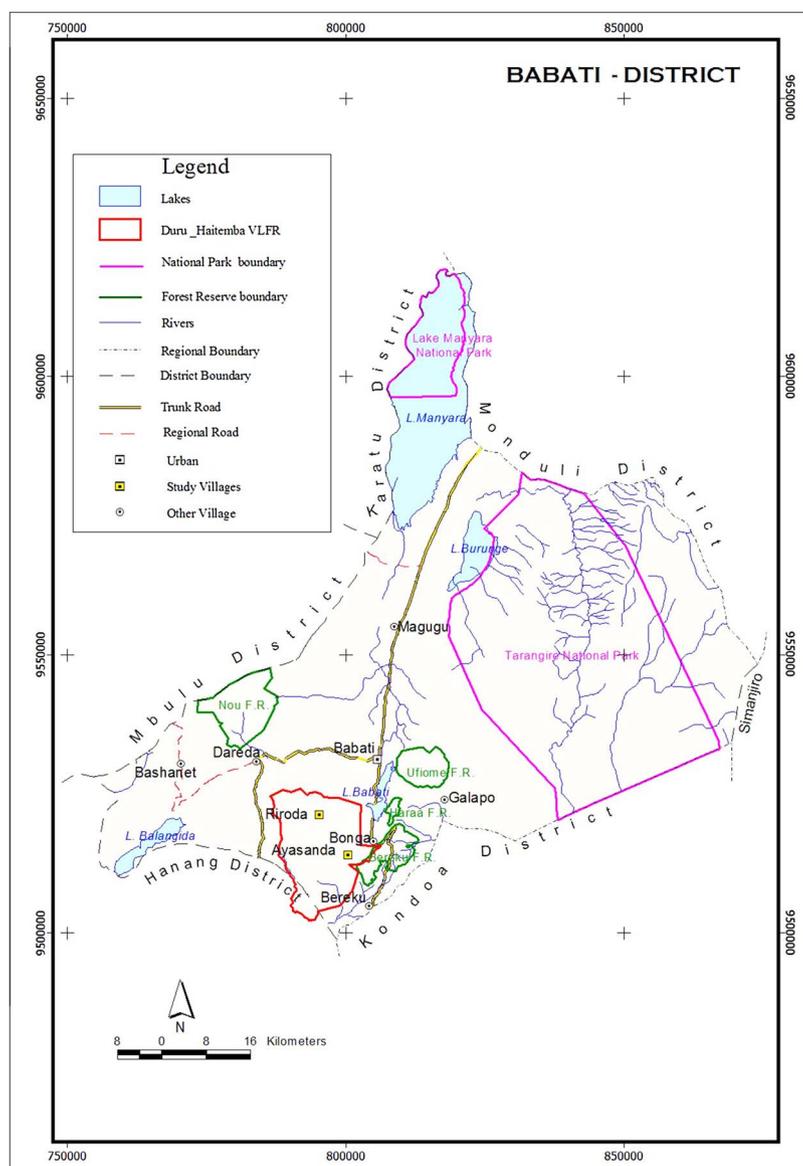


Fig. 1. Map of Babati District showing study villages and other physical features.

2. Material and methods

The research was carried out in Babati District, in north-central Tanzania where the DHVLF is located (Fig.1). According to the Population and Housing Census of August 2012, Babati District had a population of 312,392 (URT, 2003). The major land based economic activities in the study area are farming, forestry, livestock keeping and forestry related activities. Agriculture is the main economic activity in the district.

DHVLF is currently under the management of the twelve villages due to increase of more villages subdivided from the original eight which surrounded the forests. The original eight villages are Ayasanda, Riroda, Duru, Hoshan, Endanachan, Bubu, Gidas and Endagwe. The newly formed villages are Sangara, Endadmet, Endamaghai and Gesbert. Each village has a Village Natural Resources Committee (VNRC) which oversees management of village-based natural resources and revenues from them.

The Forest has a total area of 9045 ha and has been under CBFM arrangement since 1994. For management purposes, each of the twelve villages has its forest portion. These portions appear in patches and in most cases are not contiguous. Two representative villages out of nine villages surrounding the DHVLF were purposively selected in this

study. These were Ayasanda and Riroda villages, each with populations of just under 3000 people. Ayasanda was chosen because the village had already been introduced to the idea of carbon trade and REDD+ in 2006 when it hosted the K:TGAL research project which trained villagers on participatory carbon monitoring and they managed to sell carbon credits from their community forest. Ayasanda has been described by District forest officials a relatively successful case in terms of leadership, transparency and participation; Riroda provides a contrasting case study.

2.1. Data collection

Fieldwork and data collection was undertaken principally by Jacob between January – April 2012 with brief field visits by Brockington in late 2012 and early 2013. We used a mixed approach involving both qualitative and quantitative methods in data collection. We used a mixed approach involving both qualitative and quantitative methods in data collection. Jacob used questionnaires which explored use of forest resources and distribution of costs and benefits in both study villages. This approach was used to get responses from leading individuals in households. A total of 101 questionnaires were administered in Riroda and Ayasanda to a sample of households selected to be

Table 1
Number of People and Households in Riroda and Ayasanda
Source: Field data, March 2012.

Village	Number of People	Household Number	Sample Size	Sample%
Riroda	2924	795	64	8%
Ayasanda	2882	466	37	8%
Total	5806	1261	101	8%

representative of sub-villages and wealth groups. 39% of respondents to the questionnaire were women (Table 1).

Besides questionnaires, Jacob also collected qualitative data using participatory methods, which involved key informant interviews, focus group discussions, transect walks and field observations of resource use and forest condition. These key informants ($n = 27$, 7 women) were people who have lived or worked in the study area for a considerably amount of time and were acquainted with community forests and associated benefits. Informants were selected purposively due to their various occupations and experiences and included district council staff, ward leaders, village and sub-village leaders, VNRC members, Federation of Community Forest Conservation Networks in Tanzania/Shirikisho la Mtandao wa Jamii wa Usimamizi Misitu Tanzania (MJUMITA) representatives, pastoralists, farmers, charcoal-makers, timber dealers, and firewood collectors. The purpose of such interviews was to gather perceptions from those who were conversant with CBFM, forest resource utilization and associated benefits. Focus group sessions (eight in total, one of women only) were guided by a checklist of open ended questions posed on a wide range of issues including among others current and expected benefits from the forest reserve, mechanism for sharing benefits, criteria for benefit sharing, the REDD + scheme and the likely benefit sharing mechanism. Discussions were conducted mainly to test most of the information gathered by the earlier methods, and gather comprehensive information that was impossible to get through other data collection techniques.

Jacob used focus group discussion to investigate diverse perception among participants on benefit sharing issues under CBFM and the expected REDD + scheme. Jacob was able to conduct four focus group sessions of which two were carried out in each selected village consisting of 8 participants both male and females. Sources of grey literature included the Forest and Beekeeping Division, Institute of Resource Assessment resource centre (in the University of Dar es Salaam) and Babati District Council.

Brockington's visits in late 2012 and early 2013 largely entailed interviewing forestry committee members and natural resources officers in district government. He also undertook forest walks were also undertaken and much time was spent in participant observation with residents near the Mt Hanang forest reserve. This provided comparative information on the performance of the management committees of joint forest management and levels of use, and their policing, of the forest.

3. Results

3.1. Benefit sharing arrangements

In both villages, ordinary financial benefits mainly come from fines and fees/charges collected from harvesting of forest products, which villagers insist are not well distributed. Most of the income collected is used to support financial and administrative needs of the village government including the VNRC. Nevertheless, interview results (Fig. 2) with respondents in both villages indicate presence of various arrangements for sharing non-monetary benefits from their forests. In Riroda various forms of access to non-timber forest products was possible. 36% of respondents had free access, 10% access to products through free permits, and 31% paid permits to the village government

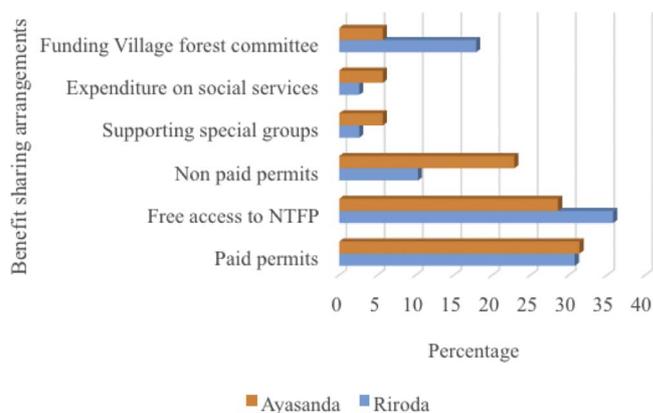


Fig. 2. Benefit sharing arrangements in Ayasanda and Riroda.

to access forest products such as building poles. In addition to these benefits 18% said they obtained (mainly financial) support from the VNRC. 3% of the respondents said there are some arrangements where forest benefits (financial) are used to support special groups (orphans and disabled children) around the village and expenditure on various social services.

In Ayasanda, respondents also revealed similar arrangements for sharing forest benefits. 32% of the respondents' said villagers get a share of forest products/benefits through special permits paid to the village government, 29% claimed villagers have free access to various Non-Timber Forest Products (NTFPs), 23% said villagers get a share of various forest products/benefits through non-paid permits. 6% said there are some arrangements where forest benefits (financial) are used to support special groups, social services and support to the VNRC. It is important to note that, in the round, most villagers in around DHVFR are benefitting from the devolved control over resources that was instituted twenty years ago. This can be attributed to presence of local arrangements for sharing non-monetary benefits from the village forests reserves as narrated in focus group discussions.³

In an interview with the VNRC chairman of Riroda, mentioned the fact that income from forest is not enough to be shared among villagers:

"The money we are getting is too small and it all ends up in paying for meetings and patrol allowances. Villagers have been enjoying non-monetary benefits for many years now; they would like enjoy other benefits especially monetary benefits. Currently I can't talk of benefits sharing while there is nothing to share with the villagers".

When asked for their opinion on whether forest benefits are shared among all villagers, 54% of respondents in Ayasanda said 'Yes' while 46% reported 'No' ($n = 37$). The majority of positive responses from respondents in Ayasanda, albeit a narrow majority, points to the fact that villagers feel benefits from the forest reserve are shared among themselves. This may be to a large extent associated with the outcomes of the K:TGAL project which brought in carbon payments, and also brought the villagers together to deliberate the best way to allocate the funds received from those payments. This resulted in the construction of a primary school as described above, although that investment also prompted complaints from other residents who protested that they could not benefit as they had no children of primary school age.⁴ These protesters form the majority of the 46% who felt benefits were not shared equally

In Riroda, on the other hand, 77% of respondents said benefits are not well shared ($n = 64$). The negative response from the majority of

³ Discussions from focus group sessions in Ayasanda and Riroda.

⁴ Evidence is based on a combination of personal observation backed by narration from FGD session with villagers in Ayasanda. The 46% who said no were mainly young people with no family and children. Apart from the KTGAL money, revenues collected by the VNRC was minimal and ended up paying their allowances and other administrative costs.

respondents in Riroda suggests that most of the villagers felt that they do not share forest benefits. However, this has not always been the case in that one key informant in Riroda recalled that some years back parts of income from forest activities was shared in terms of supporting the underprivileged children by paying bursaries and stationeries for poorer schoolchildren.⁵

In Riroda, in addition to the lack of income to distribute, there were also widespread concerns about the probity of procedures being followed. For example, it was alleged that prominent village officials including some members of the village council are collaborating with pit-sawyers who undertake illegal timber harvesting in the forest and they pay bribes to the officials. In other instances people caught with various offences were fined contrary to the existing by-laws. There was another alleged incident where a pastoralist was caught grazing cattle in the forest reserve and was fined 300,000 (about \$206 back then) but he was not issued with any receipts. More generally, accounts from respondents indicate that in number of occasions VNRC members on patrol were lured financially and compromised by offenders who bribed them and the culprits were left free.⁶

It is also clear from discussion in both villages that there are problems in both villages in that law-enforcement in both is incomplete. In both villages there have been activities such as illegal logging and charcoal making which have only benefited a few individuals, an issue that was also recently observed by Treue et al. (2014).

There were also, in both villages, inequalities of opportunity associated with being part of the VNRC. Villagers indicated that members of the VNRC had received considerably more training in alternative livelihoods activities such as bee-keeping and butterfly farming than other community members.⁷ Members of village governments had also received significantly more training compared to those not belonging to either village governments or VNRC. One participant in one of the focus groups bitterly expressed his anger on this issue and said:

“They (village government officials and VNRC members) attend so many trainings but they don’t share any of the knowledge obtained with the rest of the villagers”.

Interviews with various key informants suggest that there is a growing interest among village council members and those connected to them to attend more training through seminars and study tours because in previous trainings, they had benefited not only through the learning of new skills, but also financially through small allowances given to the participants.

As far as financial benefits are concerned, most villagers in Riroda think that it is only members of the village government who are benefiting from current financial benefits. Income obtained from various forest activities is kept by the village government and it is not clearly known how it is spent. Financial reports are rarely given to the villagers. Villagers are concerned this tendency will continue even when REDD+ payments arrive.

Dissatisfaction with major decision-making in the villages including those related to sharing of forest benefits. These are meant to be subject to the Village General Assembly for deliberation and approval. However the key informant interviews showed that, in Riroda, decisions were made by village government officers in collaboration with other local government officials (village chairman and sub-village chairpersons). Villagers recognise and resent this. In Riroda, the results shows that 68% of the respondents think decisions are made by the village government officials under Village Executive Officer, 21% of the respondents think the VNRC is the one which decides on how benefits should be distributed (Fig. 3). On the other hand 8% of respondents said

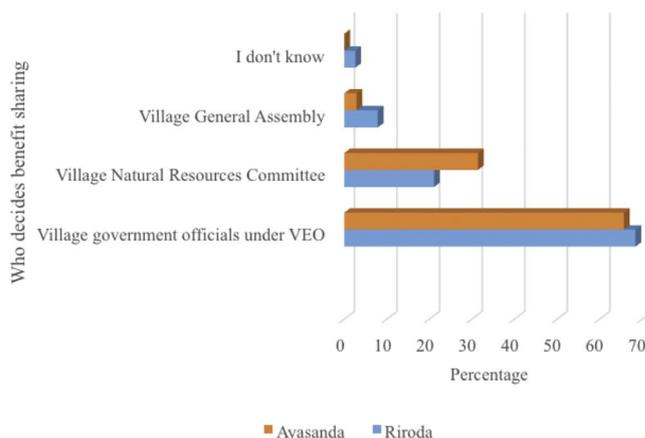


Fig. 3. Perceptions on who decide distribution of forest benefits.

the Village General Assembly is the one which decides on how benefits are shared while a small percentage of the villagers (3%) claimed not to be aware of who makes these decisions.

In Ayasanda on the other hand, survey results indicate that 66% of the interviewees think decisions are made by the Village Executive Officer in conjunction with the village government officials while 31% of the interviewees think the VNRC decides benefit distribution. 3% of the respondents interviewed said the Village General Assembly makes decision on benefit distribution. The difference is attributable to the fact that the VNRC in Ayasanda played an influential role in carbon stock measurement during the K:TAGAL project and villagers believe they still have a bigger say in decisions pertaining benefit sharing.

In both villages, focus group participants alleged that, when it comes to decisions related to exploitation of the forest and other forest related activities the village government rarely calls meetings and in incidents where meetings are called, they are not announced in advance and as a result people do not attend in larger numbers. The predominance of the view that village leaders determine decision-making matters because there was a general feeling, which we have encountered in many villages, that leaders are selfish and most of the decisions made regarding forest resources exploitation have been made to satisfy their wishes. This will make it difficult to build trust in forest management institutions. A participant in one focus group said:

“We must get rid of the current leadership otherwise in 10 years’ time the forest will not be there”.

Moreover, top village government officials in both villages were thought to be dictating decisions regarding collection and use of income obtained from various forest activities. In Riroda, the Village Executive Officer, an appointed official, instead of a member of the VNRC (an elected position), decides what to do with the money collected from various sources such as fines, products charges and tourist fees. This is controversial and viewed by the VNRC as part of a power struggle between themselves and the village government leadership. Probed about the situation, the VNRC treasurer said:

“we are not happy with the current practices by the Village Executive Officer and we have tried to question the VNRC’s right to manage income but the Village Executive Officer threatened to sack some members; we have decided to remain quiet because the Village Executive Officer is in command and we can’t continue to question leadership at the top”.

It was also observed that rules and regulations (bylaws) such as payments required to obtain permits to access some forest products have discriminated against some villagers especially the poor from accessing forest products because most of them cannot afford small payments to obtain permits. Also despite the fact that Village General Assembly meetings are open to all villagers, attendance is poor

⁵ Accounts from key informant interview with VNRC member in Riroda.

⁶ This paragraph is drawn from key informant interviews in Riroda. It was not the case in Ayasanda.

⁷ Discussions from focus group in Ayasanda.

particularly amongst women and decisions regarding forests benefits and other issues are influenced by the officials in the village government notably the Village Executive Officer. One woman among the focus group⁸ participants stated that very few people and especially women attend meetings in the village and even those who attend are afraid to voice their concerns. She went on to say:

“Most of us are not well informed about the forest and its associated benefits and we can’t present views effectively in meetings”.

In an interview with the coordinator of an NGO which worked in both villages suggested that, most villagers find it hard to attend meetings because the opportunity cost is very high for most of them who also take part in farm activities, casual labour and other income generating activities. He said that his organization has an arrangement where in meetings all villagers in attendance are guaranteed meals and drinks plus small allowance to offset the costs of time lost. The village government cannot afford to have such kind of arrangement due to financial problems

It was also reported that, in Riroda, the Village Executive Officer and other village government officials are embezzling and diverting forest income and they have left the VNRC and the Village General Assembly powerless. The VNRC complained that, despite their efforts to intensify patrol and collection of fines once the money is submitted to the Village Executive Officer, it is misused and is not accounted properly and the VNRC is unable to question the use of fines collected. In another incidence, in one of the Village General Assemblies, the village government publicly declared that 400,000 Tshs (about \$280 back in 2012) was set aside to facilitate the VNRC operation but the money was actually not accessed by the VNRC members and the matter was not openly discussed.⁹ In Ayasanda on the other hand, the village chairman is also managing most of the income related activities while the rest of the committees and ordinary villagers have turned into spectators, participating in the process but only as observers.

With regard to favouritism, most villagers also complained that village leaders tend to favour people connected to them especially their relatives and friends. According to the interviews, this favour normally happens when various development projects and income generating activities with potential benefits are introduced in the villages. Villagers said that it is due to such favours which benefit a few, that some of them have preferred to stay away from village meetings. In Ayasanda villagers complained that only a few of them who are believed to be connected with the leadership were selected to attend training in bee-keeping and biogas projects. In Riroda favouritism also manifests itself where village council members allow their close allies to engage in destructive activities in the forest reserve for the purpose of maintaining political support and strength aimed at enhancing their power to remain in the system.

Issues related to corruption were also mentioned by some respondents and also key informants. A charcoal maker from Haitemba sub-village in Ayasanda said that there is a lot of corruption within the village government and went on to say:

“Most of us rely on charcoal burning to meet our daily needs and in most cases we have no option but to pay some bribes to the sub-village head to enable us to continue with our activity.”

The above claims by the villagers might have some basis in reality due to weaknesses in governance and existence of different forms of corruption in the local government structures in Tanzania.

4. Discussion

There is a good deal of dissatisfaction recorded in the previous pages

and it is important to put it in context. Perhaps the most salient point comes from the data we first reported: most villagers in these villages are benefitting from the devolved control of natural resources that the village forest reserve system affords them. They are able to access forest products for free, or under licence. This is a considerable improvement on previous situations in two respects. First, villagers are allowed to access local resources, and second, these exist in sufficient quantity to matter to local livelihoods. The problem in the early 1990s had been that degradation of the resource due to uncontrolled access (often abetted by higher level officials) had resulted in severe degradation. Now it appears that the forest is substantially recovered. This was visible, albeit anecdotally, in Brockington's field visit, and implied in the reports he learnt of recovering hyena populations threatening local livestock. It is also clear in other recent research which found that levels of local harvesting were unsustainably high, but that this was a recent development, occasioned by the availability of the resource, which was able to recover because of the improved management regime village-based forest management afforded (Treue et al., 2014). Improved forest cover has also been recorded recently in nearby villages which are part of the larger DHVLF (Babili et al., 2015).

But does the dissatisfaction with current arrangements diminish these gains? Again, context is helpful. In Ayasanda most people feel that they benefit from the financial arrangements. The availability of the carbon revenues has made a material difference to most villagers' lives. And, in comparison to other villages, even complaint that supporting a school only benefits families with children, is welcome. If only there were many other villages with that sort of internal debate.

Improved forest management coupled with limited financial benefits has increased expectations on plans of REDD+ 's possible additional financial benefits.¹⁰ This was more evident in Ayasanda where the village has measured incremental carbon in the village forest reserve for two consecutive years (2009–2010 and 2010–2011) but there has not been any one to buy carbon credits. The lack of buyers has led to frustration that might in the long run trigger illegal harvesting which will affect forest cover and reverse the gains as documented by Treue et al. (2014).

The existence of these disputes should not draw attention away from the fact that now there are things to fight over, whereas previously there was little. Before devolution benefits from forests were controlled by District Councils and local harvesting, or sale of commodities like carbon was either illegal or not possible. The presence of the contests we have described therefore is a measure of success.

At the same time we have to recognise that these problems do threaten the gains that have been made. It is worth quoting from Treue et al's research here as their findings corroborate our own. They state that:

During fieldwork, the team encountered several groups of pit sawyers and charcoal producers in the forest. All were village members, and made no effort to conceal their activities or intimidate the inventory team. . However, the VLFR management plan does not allow harvesting of living trees, a fact, that was repeatedly emphasised by a village leader and former VNRC chairman. . Accordingly, it seems that, although the forest had regenerated to allow for harvesting, the VNRC has failed to officially modify rules from a protection to a sustainable utilization regime.’ (Treue et al., 2014: 32–34)

In explaining this development Treue and colleagues also refer to the poor levels of accountability that we have recorded in detail here. They suggest a further problem – namely low levels of oversight between the district forestry officers and the village government. This is a

¹⁰ Duru-Haitemba villages were earmarked for future REDD+ expansion after initial pilot projects across the country. There was hope that these reserves will generate income from carbon payments in the future. Village members anticipated REDD+ payments to improve their livelihoods, but they thought that can only be achieved if clear benefits sharing mechanisms are in place.

⁸ Discussions from FGD with villagers in Ayasanda.

⁹ Interview with VNRC treasurer in Riroda.

well recognised problem in the management of common pool resources (Ostrom 1990; Ostrom et al., 1999; Gibson et al., 2000; Dietz et al., 2002; Gibson et al., 2005). The external environment (generally the central of local state) has to provide the right levels of surveillance of local practices to prevent abuses of power arising.

However, it also points to a continual weakness in the moves towards devolution in Tanzania, namely that power over natural resources is contested between districts and villages. This was clear in the accounts of the establishment of village forest reserves both here (Wily, 2001a,b) and most recently in South-eastern Tanzania as demonstrated by Scheba (2014) and Sungusia and Lund (2016). Oversight of village forest reserve governance is not just a duty of district officials. It is also a means of earning revenue. The contestation is likely to escalate with the recent establishment of the Tanzania Forest Service (TFS) which is overseeing the work of the former Forestry and Beekeeping Division. The Tanzania Forest Service's emphasis is on revenue maximization from the district to the national level. This implies that this governance oversight has to extend to central government, to keep district officers in check.

What we see developing therefore, at different stages in two different villages around these Reserves, is a situation of elite capture of the benefits of devolved forest reserve management by local elites. Weak governance mechanisms at the lower levels are likely to make villagers vulnerable and in the end the benefits are more likely to be captured by few stakeholders and they may not reach the targeted group which is the forest-dependent communities. Lack of awareness among majority villagers and weakness in the VNRC as discovered is also likely to accelerate elite capture of benefits under this approach in the end REDD+ benefits will end up in the pockets of the few.

As pointed out by Blomley and Ramadhani (2006), for devolved natural resource management to be successful, accountability mechanisms should ensure that elected leaders are made accountable to those they represent. This study however, reveals that due to weak democracy at the village level there is limited room for leaders to be held accountable by the villagers. This has accelerated weak accountability and fuelled elite capture of benefits by few individuals. On a study of different village in South-western Tanzania, Green and Lund (2015) argue that the so-called model CBFM villages and their success narratives tend to suffer from the problem of dominated expertise by group of exclusive local elites. These knowledge gatekeepers hinder democratic decision making (Green and Lund, 2015). This was also evident both Ayasanda and Riroda.

The implications are that, while carbon payments could make, and in Ayasanda's case, have made a significant difference in local livelihoods, their ability to do so depends upon continued vigilance over the condition of local forest governance arrangements. For REDD+ to succeed, sufficient capacity building is needed among forest dependent communities to empower villagers regarding their rights and the need to make their leaders accountable. VNRCs need to be effective and accountable as mechanisms to prevent elite capture, and have the right forms of oversight and support to do so. Another way of putting this is in the old adage that democracy is constituted by agonistic struggle between groups with different views. There needs to be more space for that struggle in governance arrangements over village managed forest reserves in Tanzania. But as Green and Lund (2015) found, capacity building at the local level could accelerate elite capture by creating a breed of local forest bureaucratic elites. This is also what Maia Green has labeled the bureaucratization of "participation", and the emergence of elite developmental actors at the local level, a trend which reinforces hierarchical distinctions between local elites and local communities (Green 2014).

This in turn has important implications for programmes and projects working in forestry in Tanzanian, or similar contexts. A recent review of a variety of carbon forestry schemes in a variety of African countries was quite scathing as to the diverse ways in which local democratic institutions have been undermined by the preference of agencies and

development organisations to work with unelected bodies, such as traditional leaders or NGOs (Ece et al., forthcoming). These bodies can be easier and faster to deal with than democratically elected entities; but that does not excuse the mistake. These failures to chose democracy weaken the long term viability of the institutions which need to be entrusted with forest management and provision of local benefit from those forests. The developments in Ayasanda and Riroda add voice to that argument.

5. Conclusion

The study has found that, some twenty years after their inception, village-based forest reserves in Tanzania have provided local residents with benefits from harvested (and illegally harvested) timber, various non-timber products and the introduction of a fee-based grazing permits for livestock keepers. Such has been their success indeed that there are now significant forest resources which local leaders are benefitting from, to the detriment of their neighbours. With regards to the current mechanisms of distributing benefits particularly financial benefits from community-based forest management, Ayasanda and Riroda indicate that due to poor accountability, favouritism and lack of transparency, it is the most politically powerful and politically connected local elites who benefit most. This is the case even though most of the villagers get a fair share of the benefits in terms of tangible products such as firewood, wild fruits, vegetables and other NTFPs. Levels and practices of accountability locally do not yet suffice to control the forces of elite capture. In this respect the old problems of probity of village government are re-surfacing.

Carbon payments are likely to become an increasingly powerful force in the dynamics of governance arrangements over Tanzanian forests. They provide more temptation for local elites seeking to control the benefits of devolved governance. They will provide similar temptations for the district (and central) state officials. The clear implication is that REDD+ arrangements will have to engage with the upper levels of the hierarchies of forest governance, the district, regional and national authorities who can control local elites, if it is to have the development benefits desired for it.

A further implication is that the vigour of these local governance arrangements will be best monitored through studies like these which can examine the practices of local rule in order to identify how they vary from place to place. This work, in conjunction with research on levels of harvesting and forest resource use, can best determine what forms of local benefit, and elite capture are experienced at the village level.

Finally we must note that, with respect to REDD+, our study has confined itself to the prospects of local development benefits. We have not touched upon the consequences of these policies for climate change. It is not in the remit of this paper to consider whether or not healthy forests and forest governance in Tanzania will reduce greenhouse gases in the atmosphere. We can make no comment either way in that respect. Our conclusions pertain solely to the consequences of forest governance, and the possibility of carbon payments, for the well-being of rural Tanzanians.

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