

The Participatory Environmental Management Programme

SUMMARY End of Phase I External Evaluation



Conducted on behalf of PEMA's Programme Steering Committee by

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Foreword

The Participatory Environmental Management (PEMA) Programme is being implemented around the Kasyoha-Kitomi Forest Reserve in Uganda's Albertine Rift and in the South Nguru Mountains along Tanzania's Eastern Arc Mountain chain. This report presents the results of an external evaluation of PEMA's first phase which began in January 2004. It incorporates comments and suggestions provided to the consultant by roughly fifty interviewees.

On behalf of PEMA's Programme Steering Committee, I would like to thank Ms. Forrester Kibunga for her comprehensive evaluation. She had to sift through a high hill of reports, discussion papers and notes to write this well organised and extremely helpful report. I would also like to thank those stakeholders who gave their time to provide PEMA with the critical perspective we need to learn from our experiences – both good and otherwise. With this assistance, we hope to meet our complementary conservation and development goals.

On a more personal note, I would like to take this rare opportunity to thank members of PEMA's Phase I Alliance and government, civil society and private sector partners. It has been an honour working with you these past two and half years. I have been deeply impressed with the commitment that many of you have demonstrated, as well as with your ingenuity in overcoming frequently formidable obstacles. Your achievements – many of which were realised only by embracing dramatically new ways of working – do you great credit.

Dr. Charles Ehrhart
Programme Coordinator and Technical Support
The Participatory Environmental Management Programme
14th May, 2006

Summary

1. Introduction

The Participatory Environmental Management (PEMA) Programme is enhancing the productive integrity of landscapes in Tanzania's Eastern Arc Mountains and Uganda's Albertine Rift – some of the planet's most important 'hotspots' for biodiversity and biological distinctiveness. PEMA is being implemented in two phases. The goals of the first, running from 2004 to mid 2006, are primarily about participatory planning and the piloting of methodologies to scale up during Phase II. PEMA's overall objectives are to improve the livelihood security of poor, natural resource dependent households, to conserve biodiversity and environmental services of national/international importance, and to enhance the capacity of civil society and government institutions to work together to manage forest resources.

The evaluation was done near the end of Phase I. The objectives of this evaluation are to assess progress made vis-à-vis the outputs and major activities cited in PEMA's programme document, and to capture impacts and outcomes through the Most Significant Change methodology.

2. Methodology

This evaluation was conducted through one-on-one interviews and focus group discussions held in Tanzania and Uganda from 20th February through 27th April. In order to gain a broad perspective on the programme, a wide range of people were selected for interviews. Field work was conducted in villages where PEMA has been piloting its approach to Participatory Forest Management (PFM). A basic checklist of questions was drawn up for each type of discussion with space for following up new or unexpected issues. Each person or group was also asked what they felt had been the “most significant change” as a result of PEMA's presence in the landscape. Responses were interesting. They ranged from changes of attitude and awareness to an appreciation of the innovations that PEMA has brought in.

3. Findings

3.1 Efficiency

Set up: PEMA's Phase I set up entailed two Danish NGOs (WWF Denmark and CARE Denmark) working through national offices (Care Tanzania and WWF-EARPO). Field-level operations are led by local counterparts (NatureUganda and the Tanzania Forest Conservation Group) with support from the Danish Institute for International Studies. Representatives from these organisations composed PEMA's Steering Committee, which has made programme decisions efficiently.

Co-implementing through CARE-DK (for Tanzania) and WWF-DK (for Uganda) added a layer of administrative complexity. In subsequent alliance programmes implemented by CARE and WWF, delegating all administrative functions to one organization proved to be more cost-effective and less challenging in terms of coordination, communication, etc.

TFCG and NatureUganda have been responsible for implementing most Phase I activities. They hire staff and manage the programme on a day-to day basis with support from the Programme Coordinator. This has been a good arrangement for a number of reasons. For instance, it has helped build the institutional and technical capacity of both organisations. It also gave PEMA a more “local” flavour in both countries. This has been especially important in terms of PEMA's advocacy work, where national NGOs are frequently regarded as more legitimate speakers than large INGOs. It should be noted that the choice of working with TFCG and NU was appropriately strategic. Indeed, both institutions seem set to be major players in their respective countries for many years to come. PEMA has improved their capacity to “deliver” on a wide range of environment and livelihoods outcomes.

In other words, important lessons have been learnt about how to improve the Alliance set up in Denmark. With regards to the rest of PEMA's set up, its design entails multiple benefits (many of which are long-term) that substantially outweigh costs.

Working relationships and partnerships: PEMA has been able to forge productive relationships with key institutions in both its operational landscapes. This has improved its efficiency and created a firm foundation for further work. PEMA has worked with local institutions to form the Landscape Coordination Committees (LCCs), through which a great deal of useful communication and coordinated action has already taken place. PEMA has also invited local people to take part in its research and surveys, thus acquainting key stakeholders with what the programme is doing and building important relationships in the process. This engaged and engaging approach has served well.

Capacity building: PEMA has invested heavily in building the capacity of strategic institutions in its landscapes. These include

- District, Forestry and Beekeeping Division (TZ) and National forest Authority (UG) officials. PEMA has sent government staff for training courses in Participatory Forest Management (PFM) and environmental management. PEMA has also sent them on highly regarded national and international study visits.*
- Village Environmental Committees in Tanzania have been strengthened or established through PFM.*
- In both Uganda and Tanzania, PEMA is working with local CBOs. Some of their staff members have been sent for training in PFM. In addition, some organisational development (OD) has been provided – especially focused on umbrella groups (i.e. second-level CSOs). Of note, PEMA has not been able to provide as much OD as it had hoped due to a lack of capable service providers in both Uganda and Tanzania.*
- Whenever possible, PEMA conducted its surveys, transects etc. with the involvement of local and forest authority staff in order for them to learn new techniques and better understand the landscapes in which they work.*
- The process of implementing PEMA has increased the capacity of TFCG and NU in many ways. In addition, PEMA provided financial support to TFCG for OD.*

Two country “learning portfolio”: PEMA has two sites – one in Tanzania and the other in Uganda. These landscapes are ecologically, socially and institutionally similar enough that worthwhile comparisons can be drawn between them. It is likely that having these different sites has helped the programme develop more broadly replicable methodologies and draw broader “lessons learnt” than would have been possible if operating in just one. NU and TFCG have also had a chance to meet, and these two organisations have learnt from each other. Most of PEMA's Alliance members, as well as external stakeholders, felt this was advantageous – especially given PEMA's experimental nature – and warranted additional transaction costs.

Landscape approach: A landscape approach to natural resource management treats protected forests, etc. within their larger contexts. In the case of PEMA, these were populated areas with strong socio-economic and ecological linkages. PEMA has demonstrated that the approach can work. The programme has brought people within its operational landscapes together in a new way. For their part, government officials working with PEMA say that it has enriched (district and catchments) planning processes.

In order for PEMA's landscape approach to continue working, it needs funding levels to reflect the scale of its activities. These needs are not small. Nor are they impossibly large, either, due to PEMA's way of collaborating with others. This raises an interesting point, namely: that it may be necessary to link the landscape approach with collaborative action planning. Otherwise, interventions might be unrealistically expensive and unwieldy.

The design of Phase I as a precursor to an enlarged Phase II: Large-scale livelihood and conservation interventions are frequently designed on the basis of limited contextual knowledge. This undermines their effectiveness and local buy-in. In contrast, PEMA invested an extraordinary amount of resources into developing an understanding of its landscapes. By sharing the results of its research with other stakeholders and engaging them in participatory landscape assessments and action planning, PEMA may well have circumvented problems faced by other projects.

In many respects, PEMA's work was highly participatory. Government, CSOs and even the private sector routinely participated in programme activities. However, the poorest people (and women more generally) in its landscapes were not involved in PEMA's processes to the degree aspired to in its programme document. There are a number of reasons why this seems to have occurred, including lack of staff "sensitisation" (e.g. gender training) and the fact that the "poorest of the poor" are notoriously difficult to engage in such new initiatives. For instance, PEMA recognises that poorer villagers are often the ones most dependent on forest resources and most vulnerable to changes in forest management. Yet when they were invited to workshops, etc. they were consistently the least likely to attend and speak out. In such circumstances, additional staff training – especially for those whose background isn't in the social sciences (e.g. the foresters and biologists) – may be vital.

3.2 Effectiveness

This section examines the extent to which planned activities have been achieved.

Characterise landscape: A number of surveys and other studies were undertaken in order to characterise PEMA's landscapes, including: ward/parish profiles, stakeholder analysis, policy inventories, forest inventories, and basic biophysical data. This data has been entered into a GIS database for Uganda and will soon be done for Tanzania. The results will be available on the web. Perhaps more importantly, PEMA intends to package results from the landscape characterization and monitoring surveys in a "popular" report and series of posters and leaflets for local distribution. Other projects should follow this example of remembering that – in order for information to be useful (and costly studies to be justifiable) – it needs to be accessible to the "people that matter"... and that it matters what villagers know and think.

Landscape delineation: Detailed maps have been developed of both landscapes as a planning tool. Several landscape levels have been distinguished as a means of planning and prioritising activities. In Tanzania, a detailed three-dimensional map was also created. This is the first of its kind in the country. Community members found it easier to interpret this tactile map, and this facilitated their meaningful participation in meetings with senior local authorities.

Develop Collaborative Landscape Action Plans: A vision-based methodology was developed for drawing out stakeholders' shared vision and common goals. This approach, expanded upon from CARE's work in other countries, turned stakeholders' attention away from problems, obstacle and conflicts towards shared hopes and what might be accomplished by working together. The visioning process fed directly into formulating Collaborative Landscape Action Plans (CLAPs).

Many participants liked this methodology. Its main advantages included:

- Reaching to the grassroots and involving a wide range of stakeholders*
- The status and negative trends of forest goods and services were brought out clearly*
- Stakeholders had the opportunity to think together about practical solutions to common problems*

Collaborative Landscape Action Plans were formulated at the end of the visioning process. Gaps and synergies between the activities of different stakeholders were identified. Government officials said that many strands of planning are incorporated into theirs and the work done with PEMA would broaden and enrich their plans.

Monitoring conservation impacts of activities under CLAPs: *Designing a conservation impacts monitoring strategy has been a long process, with PEMA trying to reinforce and complement rather than duplicate the work of others. Ideally, this will make PEMA's design more sustainable. The programme adopted a 'State, Pressure, Response' model and selected, adapted or designed from scratch tools which are appropriate to regional conditions. For reasons of efficiency, the grass-roots level Knowledge, Attitudes and Practices Survey was merged with DIIS's Poverty & Livelihoods Survey. PEMA's approach to monitoring conservation impacts seems to have struck a rare good balance between needs and practical constraints. It could usefully be replicated in other sites.*

Monitoring poverty and livelihoods impact of activities implemented under CLAPs: *DIIS designed PEMA's Poverty and Livelihoods Survey. It was well thought through and generated a large amount of useful information in a relatively concise package.*

Develop and pilot methodologies for Participatory Forest Management: *Both government and programme staff received training in PFM and community-based natural resource management. Government officials reported that they were impressed with the training and that it improved their attitude towards working with communities. Once PEMA established this foundation, it began piloting PFM in "clusters" composed of five villages in Tanzania and nine in Uganda. The Programme's approach is emphasising modus operandi that reduce transactions costs and seek to balance villagers' rights and responsibilities vis-à-vis the conservation of forest resources.*

In Tanzania, PFM (called "Joint Forest Management" in national policy documents) is being implemented around the relatively undisturbed Kanga Forest Reserve. A number of activities have been completed at village level – including the formation and/or strengthening of Village Environmental Committees (VECs). It is hard to gauge impacts at this early stage, but at least one group of illegal pit sawyers has purportedly been forced by the VECs to leave the forest. This is encouraging. However, it is evident from even brief visits to the landscape that the situation will ultimately be untenable unless government addresses the complicity of its own staff in the illegal timber trade.

In Uganda, PEMA has made a major contribution to PFM (called "Collaborative Forest Management" in national policy documents). One of PEMA's most remarkable achievements at the local level has been to change the attitudes that communities and the NFA had towards each other. Mutual hostility has largely been replaced by cooperation. Now, communities even assist the NFA to identify those individuals who continue to carry out illegal activities in the forest. On the whole, local people seem very positive about the CFM process; and almost everyone in the communities visited during this evaluation was aware of what is going on. It appears they sincerely believe that strict management of dwindling forest resources may be hard but, in the end, worthwhile. Of special note: PEMA and the NFA have had a very fruitful association so far, which is how elements of the landscape approach need to work. PEMA has helped the NFA to carry out its activities, and both institutions have subsequently learnt from each other.

Assess the potential for PES schemes in programme landscapes: *PEMA's South Nguru site is part of a five-country Payment for Water Environmental Services project being implemented by CARE, WWF and IIED (with funding from DANIDA and DGIS). The first phase of this initiative began in January 2006. Meanwhile, CARE is developing a biodiversity PES proposal for PEMA's Kasyoha-Kitomi site (for submission to GEF). PEMA's Alliance*

members have also laid the groundwork to implement carbon PES in both sites during Phase II. By partnering with ICRAF, they hope this will culminate in the wide-scale adoption of agroforestry practices that raise household income and reduce local vulnerability to climatic variation.

Implement conservation and livelihood interventions in communities piloting PFM: It is important that people have alternatives to the unsustainable use of forest resources – especially when this applies to their livelihoods. Activities in Uganda are particularly well designed for two reasons:

- PEMA is effectively targeting poorer households (and especially those who had been engaged in the illegal extraction of forest resources)
- Through ToT, PEMA is strengthening the capacity of more mature institutions within its landscape to provide technical extension services to other community based organisations (CBOs)

In Tanzania, TFCG is currently working with five primary schools, several CBOs and a few individuals to develop native tree nurseries growing high quality seedlings. Ideally, this will help PEMA re-establish functional biodiversity in the landscape as a whole, rather than being predominantly isolated in forest reserves. TFCG also intends these nurseries to be an important starting point for environmental education, awareness raising and community mobilisation. Progress has, unfortunately, been slowed by the loss of key staff and necessary responses to unforeseeable crises. For instance, TFCG has had to help the Forestry and Beekeeping Division (FBD) reflect on and change its response to slash-and-burn farming in forest reserves. While the FBD initially favoured forceful eviction, PEMA was able to intercede. With assistance from the Lawyers' Environmental Action Team (LEAT), TFCG helped the FBD and farmers negotiate a mutually acceptable way forward. The results have been disappointing due to lack of follow up by the FBD. Nonetheless, villagers say that this marked an important change since FBD's only recourse had previously been (ineffective) threats. Farmers like PEMA's negotiated approach, and people point out that fear will never make them understand about caring for forests.

Strengthen CSOs in PFM/CFM communities: PEMA has helped TFCG and NatureUganda invest in “organisational development.” This seems wise in light of need and the fact that PEMA's successful implementation ultimately depends on the level of OD within these two institutions. However, most resources are being used to strengthen strategically selected CBOs. Institutional assessments have been conducted in both Uganda and Tanzania. In response, relevant organisational and technical skills are already being built and/or strengthened.

Establish LCCs through which to oversee implementation of CLAPs: LCCs were established early in Phase I to bring institutional stakeholders together and facilitate discussion/planning on issues of common concern. This is one of PEMA's best innovations. It is already demonstrating its value in terms of:

- Sharing information and ideas
- Avoiding the duplication of efforts
- Creating synergies
- Addressing conflicts and establishing functional working relationships between different institutions

Develop PEMA Alliance and establish presence in the landscape: The PEMA Alliance has been established and well developed as per activities outlined in its programme document. Exercises have been done to improve Alliance members' understanding of what is required to work effectively within complex partnerships. It is noteworthy that PEMA's Alliance members didn't take “partnership skills” for granted (as often happens). Instead, they invested time and energy into learning/strengthening these skills even when there were no particular problems. This is an excellent example that others would do well to emulate.

Develop a system for monitoring and evaluating programme processes: An appropriate system for programme monitoring has been developed and implemented for Phase I. It should be revisited and expanded to include greater emphasis on impacts and outcomes for Phase II.

Communicate Phase I experiences/lessons learnt and advocate pro-poor approaches in forest landscapes: PEMA's LCCs have become effective venues for sharing information, experiences and lessons learnt. It seems they are becoming "learning environments" for all members. In addition, experiences and lessons are passing from NatureUganda and TFCG into national networks. Meanwhile, DIIS plans to convene a seminar on PEMA in November 2006. This date has been pushed back in order to maximise the number of lessons which might be drawn from the CLAP process. With regards to pro-poor advocacy, PEMA has made a number of surprisingly significant contributions given its young age. In particular, PEMA is helping to improve PFM in both countries and (especially in Tanzania) lay the foundation for "pro-poor" payments for environmental services.

Develop proposals and secure funding for phase II activities: PEMA has demonstrated that "participatory" project planning – even at the landscape level – can occur if donors are willing to invest in a proper process. It will be important to sustain the fundamentals of this process throughout phase two. Ultimately, it may establish conditions for the continuous adaptive management of forest resources when PEMA ends. In the meantime, PEMA has used results of the CLAP process to develop a proposal for the EU. Additional proposals are being written for submission to DANIDA and CIDA.

3.3 Impacts

PEMA's first phase was primarily about information gathering, awareness raising, piloting new methodologies and the participatory design of Phase II. Nonetheless, there have been a number of important "impacts," including:

- *PEMA's presence in its operational landscapes has reduced rates of forest destruction. This is due to changes in attitudes (see below), critical support to law enforcement, and many villagers' sense that they can safely break their silence about illegal activities – including those of government staff.*
- *PEMA has increased the amount of information available to stakeholders. This has led some to adopt new strategies and undertake new activities.*
- *PEMA has contributed to several important "changes of attitude," including forest authorities' attitudes towards communities (and vice-versa), villagers' attitudes towards the value of forest resources, villagers' attitudes towards illegal pit-sawing, etc.*
- *PEMA has improved the organizational capacity of its national partners (TFCG and NatureUganda; increased the technical skills of its national partners, government authorities and some CBOs (especially with regards to PFM, tree planting and other forest related income generating activities).*
- *PEMA has dramatically improved information sharing and collaboration between stakeholder institutions in its operational landscapes.*
- *PEMA has pioneered several innovations, most notably: its approach to landscape delineation, Collaborative Landscape Action Plans (and the vision-based methodology through which they were developed), Landscape Coordination Committees, more effective (and fair) approaches to PFM, KAP monitoring, etc. Many of these innovations are already spreading in Tanzania and Uganda.*
- *PEMA has put the South Nguru Mountains 'on the conservation map.' The value of the South Nguru Mountain forests was either unknown or ignored by critical institutional stakeholders before PEMA started working there. It is now considered an important part of the Eastern Arc Mountain Chain.*

4. Relevance

PEMA's objectives are relevant to Tanzania's and Uganda's poverty strategies, their forest policies and cross-cutting environment strategies. Meanwhile, PEMA complements two of the Millennium Development Goals and three goals of the Convention on Biological Diversity.

5. Replicability

PEMA has given a great deal of thought to maximising the replicability of its overall approach and specific methodologies in contexts comparable to those encountered in the Eastern Arc and Albertine Rift. In particular, it has tried to develop low cost ways of getting things done and establishing cost-effective synergies between civil society, government and the private sector. It is likely that the overarching approach and specific methodologies developed by PEMA can usefully be replicated. This is demonstrated by the fact that some aspects of its overall approach, and some of its specific methods, are already being picked-up by others.

6. Key Recommendations

- The potential of the CLAP approach will only be realized if PEMA invests substantial energy into helping district and forest authorities see how to incorporate the results into their planning processes. They are used to outsiders funding proposed activities, and they will need patient assistance to overcome this mindset. The scenario of the landscape turning into lots of small PEMA projects must be avoided, and PEMA must continue to 'sell' CLAP to potential partners.*
- The LCCs are a good idea. Phase II needs to ensure they become self-supporting.*
- PEMA has made a good start on PFM. In Uganda, the intensity may not be feasible at the scale envisioned for Phase II. A realistic level of engagement with communities needs to be identified. In Tanzania, PEMA needs to ensure that its activities reach sub-villages if PFM is to take root.*
- PEMA needs to do more to ensure that its activities reach the poorest social groups. Gender training for staff would help those with an environment/conservation background.*
- PEMA in Tanzania needs to develop a strategy for addressing illegal activities and poor governance. This is a fundamental obstacle to the sustainable management of forest resources in the South Nguru Mountains.*
- PEMA needs to ensure that salaries for Phase II staff are commensurate with the quality and quantity of work expected of them. This means that salaries must be substantially higher than they were in Phase I.*
- If Phase II is to include multiple landscapes in a single learning portfolio, then PEMA should invest in IT to facilitate inter-landscape communication. Staff exchanges should also be considered.*

7. Conclusion

The period covered by this evaluation covers January-2004 through May 2006. Most activities during this first phase were either directly a part of, or intended to feed into, a participatory planning process for phase two. PEMA's landscape approach, collaborative action planning, landscape coordination committees and different impact monitoring methodologies all address real needs in realistic ways. It is already evident that PEMA's pioneering work is having a favourable impact in the South Nguru and Kasyoha-Kitomi landscapes. At the same time, PEMA's ideas are spreading and, as a result, may make substantially broader contributions to Alliance members' ambitious development and conservation goals. In this sense, PEMA represents great value-for-money in addition to its other accomplishment.