



Lessons learned from the 'Adding Value to the Arc Project: Forests and Livelihoods in the South Nguru Mountains'



View from Diburuma VLFR

COMMUNITY-BASED FOREST MANAGEMENT



Training of sustainable charcoal in Diburuma village

The project established 11 village land forest reserves (VLFRs) covering 13,892 ha. These new reserves will significantly improve ecological connectivity between Mkingu Nature Reserve and Kanga Forest Reserve, the two main forest blocks in the South Nguru Mountains.

Although deforestation across the South Nguru landscape increased between 2010 and 2016, the rate was significantly lower in the villages with Community Based Forest Management (CBFM), with the lowest rates being recorded in the village land forest reserves. This indicates that CBFM is an effective tool in curbing deforestation.

Sustainable charcoal production and sustainable timber harvesting are integrated into the management of 5 of the VLFRs. The fees generated from these forest-based enterprises are being used to finance the management of the reserves, and to contribute to community development projects. Establishing revenue flows to the reserves is important for their sustainability.

The CBFM process was implemented alongside village land use planning in order to 'anchor' the Village Land Forest Reserves in a more comprehensive land use plan. This has helped to strengthen land tenure. Both processes require adequate time and the final steps of formalising by-laws and securing village land certificates can take years. **Continued...**



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Communities will continue to need support from District staff beyond the project lifespan. Resolving conflicts related to the enforcement of CBFM by-laws is one area where ongoing support is needed. Despite this need, it has been difficult for Mvomero District Council to allocate funds to support CBFM.

The project invested considerable time and resources into awareness raising during the CBFM develop-

ment process including consultation meetings in every sub-village. This has helped to generate more widespread understanding and support for CBFM within the communities.

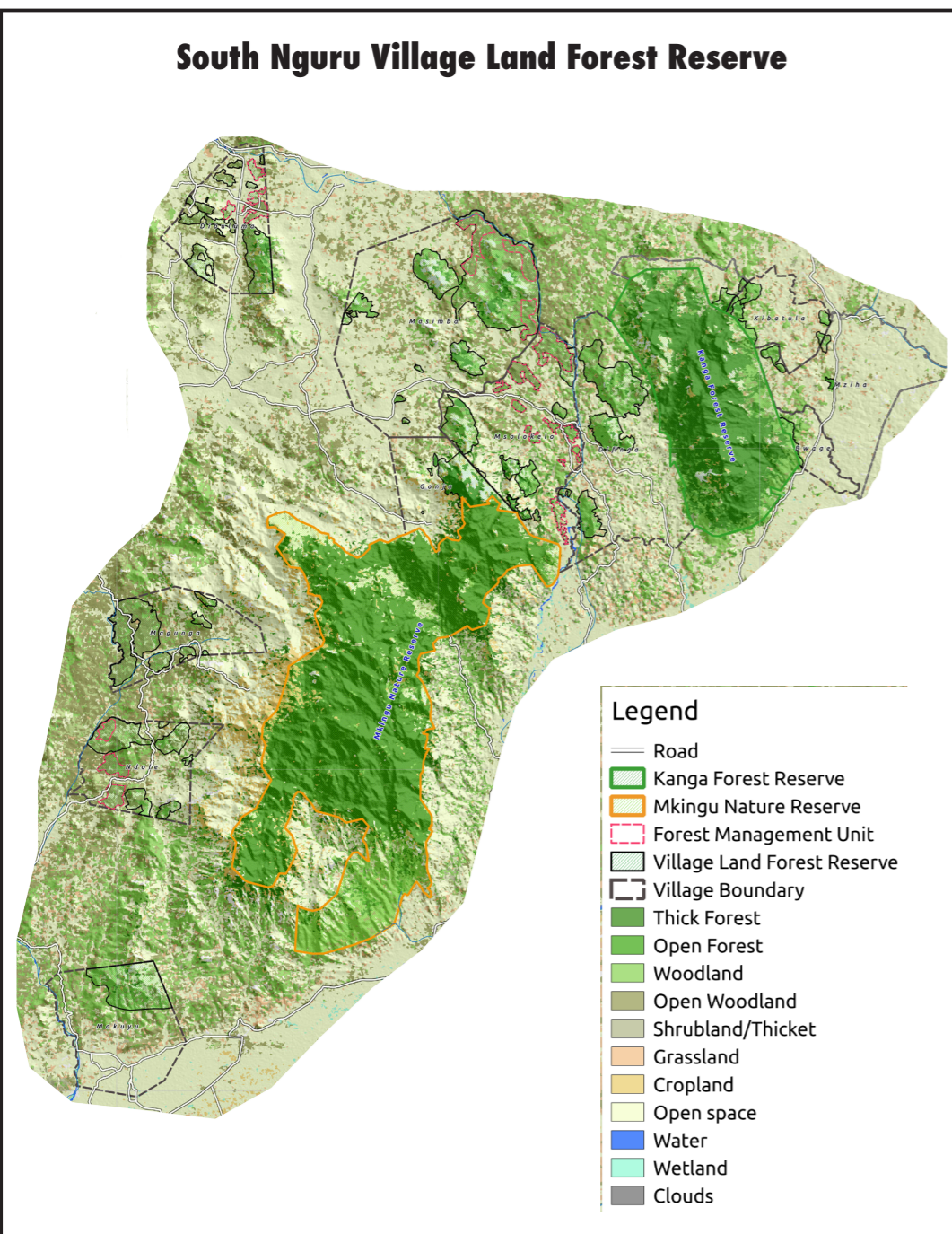
Deliberate efforts were made to ensure that women played an active role in the CBFM planning process; that their voices were heard during the consultation process; and that their interests are reflected in the VLFR plans and by-laws.

The 'Adding Value to the Arc' Project

The Tanzania Forest Conservation Group in partnership with the Tanzania Forest Services Agency, Mvomero District Council and MJUMITA successfully implemented the project 'Adding Value to the Arc: Forests and Livelihoods in the South Nguru Mountains' between 1st January, 2013 - 31st March 2018. The project was funded by the European Union.

The project aimed to alleviate pov-

erty and improve economic resilience amongst marginalised rural, and natural resource-dependent communities living in Mvomero District. One of the expected results of the project was for community-level institutions and district authorities to be exercising legislated rights and responsibilities for management of forest resources on village land. In this document, we present the key results and lessons learned in the pursuit of this result.



The South Nguru Mountains

The initiative was implemented in the South Nguru Mountains, a globally important site for biodiversity conservation, due to the presence of many endemic and threatened plant and animal species. The mountains are also an important source of water for the Wami River. The forests have been threatened by clearance for agriculture and illegal logging.

Most of the remaining forest is protected in two government-owned reserves: Mkingu Nature Reserve and Kanga Forest Reserve. The land around the reserves belongs to villages. At the start of the project, the South Nguru woodlands on village land were being converted to agricultural land at a rate of approximately 2.5% per year with some villages clearing forest at a rate of 8.7% per year. There is widespread poverty in the landscape and this is an underlying driver of deforestation. In some villages, the sale of land to people from outside of the village has also driven deforestation as the new owners often clear the forest to demonstrate their tenure and establish farms. The project set out to reduce deforestation on village land and to support the communities to benefit sustainably from their woodlands.

Community-Based Forest Management in the South Nguru Mountains

Community-Based Forest Management is a form of Participatory Forest Management. It refers to community management of forests on land under the direct control of communities. In Tanzania this is known as village land.

In each of the 11 villages, the project began the CBFM process by providing information about the purpose and benefits of community-based forest management; and then assisted each community to identify areas of woodland to include in their village land forest reserve. Each community then developed a management plan and by-laws as a basis for governing the way that they would manage their reserves. The plans and by-laws also define rights to harvest and benefit directly from the forests. Care was taken to safeguard communities' rights to access different forest products.

Where the village land forest reserves were sufficiently large, dense and accessible, provisions were made for sustainable harvesting of timber and charcoal. Initially the project also intended to support the communities to access REDD+ funds. REDD+ stands for Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and forest Degradation. A global market exists to pay for measurable reductions in deforestation. The project design en-

visaged that the South Nguru communities could benefit from REDD+. However, following the decline in the price of carbon credits, this component of the project was adapted to focus more on other forest-based enterprises, particularly sustainable charcoal production.

In each village, the draft plan and by-laws were presented to the residents of that village during meetings held at sub-village and village level. This provided an opportunity for community members to comment on the plans and by-laws. The plans and by-laws were then approved by the Village Assembly, and signed by the village leaders.

Having been signed by the village leaders, the documents were then presented to the District Lawyer and the District Council. The Council approved the plans and by-laws, and they were then taken to the District Executive Director to sign before being returned to the communities. From the time of approval by the Village Assembly, the communities have proceeded with implementing their plans and by-laws whilst awaiting the District to approve, sign and return the documents.

The CBFM planning process was led by Mvomero District Council with support from TFCG. MJUMITA provided additional training on good governance to the communities. TFS also participated in the planning process.

PROJECT IMPACT

Securing forest land tenure

Establishing village land forest reserves has formalised and strengthened the communities' forest land tenure. CBFM gives the communities the exclusive right to decide on how their forests are managed and used. Once CBFM is established, other parts of government, whether local or central, can no longer issue harvesting permits for forest products within the Village Land Forest Reserves.

Reducing Deforestation

Deforestation across the South Nguru landscape has accelerated over the decade from 2007 - 2017. In the non-CBFM villages the annual rate of deforestation increased from -2.55% to -3.83% between 2007/10 and 2010/16. In contrast in the CBFM villages, the increase in the annual deforestation rate was significantly lower, going from -2.29% to -2.69%. This indicates that the rate of increase has slowed in the CBFM villages relative to the rest of the landscape. Within the village land forest reserves, the average

annual rate of deforestation was -0.48% between 2010 and 2016. This is lower than in Mkingu Nature Reserve where annual deforestation reached -0.81% from 2010 to 2014. Most of the village land forest reserves supported by the project lie between Kanga FR and Mkingu NR in the north and north-east of the landscape. These woodlands are critical habitat 'stepping stones' that increase the ecological connectivity between the two reserves.

Generating funds for reserve management and community development

Once a VLFR is established, communities can retain the revenues generated from fees and fines from their reserve. In the neighbouring district of Kilosa, some communities are now earning more than US\$ 10,000 per year from charcoal harvesting fees. These funds are invested in reserve management and community development projects. In the South Nguru Mountains, the VLFRs supported by the project have earned over US\$ 7,500 in fees and fines, of which US\$ 6,500 has been invested in communi-

ty development projects and US\$ 700 has been invested in reserve management.





Capacity building and Gender

The project has built the communities' capacity to manage their VLFRs by providing them with skills, equipment and a mechanism to generate funds to pay for CBFM beyond the project lifespan. The project has also worked with local government staff to build their capacity to support the villages practicing CBFM.

The project emphasised the importance of gender equity in the management of the VLFRs. For example, in all 11 villages where CBFM has been established, women comprise at least 25 % of the members of Village Natural Resources Committees. This includes 9 villages where women comprise more than 33%. Women were involved in developing the CBFM plans and by-laws and were consulted by the planning team in order to ensure that their needs were properly reflected in the CBFM plans and by-laws.







Lessons learned

-  By establishing CBFM in the South Nguru landscape the project has reduced deforestation; secured communities' rights to manage and benefit from their forests; and established a sustainable source of revenue for communities to use for development projects and reserve management.
-  It is important that CBFM is established in a participatory way and that the establishment process is accompanied by widespread awareness raising.
-  Establishing VLFRs takes time. In particular the final steps of formalising the reserves at District level took months and, in some cases, years. The final steps required close follow-up to ensure that all of the documents passed through all of the necessary steps, including being returned to the communities.
-  Local government has a critical role to play in supporting CBFM once donor funding has ended. District staff have been involved at every stage of the CBFM development process. However, the District Council have yet to allocate resources for supporting or expanding CBFM and some district staff trained by the project have retired and have not been replaced. Conflict resolution is one area where communities are particularly in need of support, particularly to address illegal livestock grazing in the village land forest reserves and to resolve conflicts within and between Village Natural Resources Committees and Village Councils.

Recommendations for stakeholders

Based on the project's experience over the last 5 years, we have the following recommendations for stakeholders including District Councils, Development Partners, NGOs and communities:

-  Extend Community Based Forest Management support to other villages with forest lands in the South Nguru Mountains.
-  Given the high value of the forests in the South Nguru Mountains, more investment is needed from the District Council to support Community Based Forest Management.
-  More cooperation is needed between stakeholders, particularly when it comes to law enforcement.
-  Additional external support is needed to develop further the forest-based enterprises including the sustainable charcoal and timber production value chains.



ABOUT THE PROJECT PARTNERS

The Tanzania Forest Conservation Group (TFCG) is a Tanzanian Non-Governmental Organisation. TFCG's mission is to conserve and restore the biodiversity of globally important forests in Tanzania for the benefit of the present and future generations.
tfcg@tfcg.or.tz www.tfcg.org

The Tanzania Community Forest Conservation Network (MJUMITA) is a national network of community groups which enables forest adjacent communities to engage more actively in participatory forest management.
mjumita@mjumita.org www.mjumita.org

Tanzania Forest Service (TFS) is a national agency which has been given a mandate to manage national forest reserves and plantations on general lands.
mpingo@tfs.go.tz www.tfs.go.tz

Mvomero District Council (MVDC) is one of the six districts of Morogoro Region.
dedmvomero@yahoo.com

The European Union The European Union funded the project. More information about the work the EU is doing in Tanzania can be accessed on: https://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/tanzania/2009/about-eu-delegation-tanzania_en

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