ENGAGING COMMUNITIES IN DECENTRALIZATION: CONTRIBUTION OF LOCAL INSTITUTIONS IN MANAGING KENYAN FORESTS

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Abstract

The introduction of Participatory Forestry Management (PFM) in Kenya has led to the formation of community based organizations referred to as Community Forest Associations (CFAs). Most of the CFAs are preparing to enter into forest management agreements with the Kenya Forest Service (KFS). This will confer management roles to the community with KFS retaining the forest resource ownership right and the right to withdraw the agreement in total or parts of it.

Results from data collected in 12 Kenyan forests over a period of about 10 years indicate that a majority of the associations are moving towards forming confederates of several user groups with the aim of managing and utilizing forests close to them. Some of the Associations are involved in diverse activities ranging from forest protection, monitoring and management to water extraction and distribution. The roles of the CFAs have been changing over time from being directly controlled by the KFS to a more decentralized system where they are more involved in decision making. They have further expanded their roles from lobbying to conflict management, fundraising, negotiating with KFS, initiating rural development and forestry development activities. These new trends have also led to the formation of splinter groups due to power and leadership wrangles.

This paper aims to analyze the role of these CFA's based on their past experience by evaluating aspects of forest management that communities can undertake effectively after decentralization and some of the challenges in performing these functions. It concludes by coming up with recommendations on strategies towards improving their effectiveness in forest management.

1. INTRODUCTION

It is widely believed that decentralizing the management of natural resources can increase both efficiency and equity (Ribot, 2005). The implication here is that the efficiency and equity benefits of decentralization are derived from democratic processes that encourage local institutions and local authorities to serve and deliver relevant services to local people. Efficiency increases because of more local input resulting in better-targeted policies and lower transaction costs and therefore more beneficial to central governments. But the equity and democracy benefits are more likely to benefit the local communities (Larson, 2005).

Decentralization in many parts of the world has taken many forms ranging from de-concentration to devolution of power and the implication of community participation is often implied with many references such as participatory forest management (PFM), joint forest management (JFM), community forest management (CFM) among others. In many parts of Africa, PFM is still new and its progress is uneven across the region (Yemshaw, 2007). It involves forging a partnership between the local community and resource users and the central local governments for sustainable management of forests (Ngece et al, 2007). The inclusion of communities is in essence, an approach towards achieving forest sustainability and biodiversity conservation with socio-economic objectives which include equity, conflict resolution, forest production, poverty reduction and sustainable utilization (Kallert et al., 2000). The positive results of implementing PFM process is demonstrated through a change of attitude to the forest resource by the local forest adjacent communities and hence, a change in the level of forest conservation and improved livelihoods. But such results are highly influenced by the mode of participation adopted by the PFM implementation process.

In Kenya, PFM has been a result of the government's 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% and to reduce forest destruction and degradation (GOK, 2007). A new policy has therefore been passed that applies PFM principles to all forests in the country. New institutions are therefore getting established with the aim of co-managing the forest resources with the central and local government institutions such as the Kenya Forest Service (KFS) and the County Councils (CCs). To enter into such co-management arrangements, the local communities are legally expected to form and register Community Forest Associations (CFAs) within different forests distributed across the country (GOK, 2007).

This paper discusses the contribution of local community institutions (Community Forest Associations) to the governance of Kenyan forests. The decentralized programmes being implemented in the forestry sector are still in the initial stages

and more needs to be understood on the roles these associations. In addressing this issue, the paper evaluates the associations' past experiences in light of their potential in effectively undertaking their expected roles in the decentralization process. It further highlights some of the key challenges that they encounter and finally gives recommendations on effective participation by the CFA's.

The first section of this paper presents some background on decentralization and the Participatory Forest Management (PFM) process in Kenya. The second section briefly outlines the objectives of the policy and the role of CFA's within the new forest policy. The third section of the paper presents the methods used in the study. This is followed by a presentation and discussion of the results. The last section concludes the study and suggests a few policy recommendations.

2.0 THE NEW FOREST ACT

The New Forests Act 2005 has a clear framework and incentives for community and private sector involvement in the forestry sector. It gives power to the Kenya Forest Service (KFS) an administrative body that replaced the former Forest Department (FD). KFS is a semi autonomous body that is free of political influence from the government but managed by a board made up of both government and non-governmental persons. There are also Forest Conservation Committees in conservancies[1] established by the Board all over Kenya. The Forest Service is expected to devolve powers to Forest Conservation Committees, the Private Sector, and Community Forest Associations. The Forest Conservation Committees should be responsible for informing the Board on issues and ideas raised by people in their conservancy and monitoring and implementation of the Act and other forest regulations.

The goal of the new Forest Policy is to "enhance the contribution of the forest sector in the provision of economic, social and environmental goods and services." Three specific objectives of the new forest policy that touch on activities of the forest associations include:

1. Contribution to poverty reduction, employment creation and improvement of livelihoods through sustainable use, conservation and management of forests and trees
2. Contribution to sustainable land use through soil, water and biodiversity conservation and tree planting through sustainable management of forests and trees

[1] Conservancies are formed based geographical boundaries of the forest rather than the existing administrative boundaries

3. Promotion of participation of the private sector, communities and other stakeholders in forest management to conserve water catchment areas, create employment, reduce poverty and ensure the sustainability of forest management

These objectives will be achieved through the contributions of community forest associations. But PFM processes in some pilot sites have raised certain challenges and the most crucial question has been whether CFA's are really capable of managing an entire forest area or block.

2.1 Community Forest Associations (CFAs) in Kenya

The new forest act has clear provisions for the recognition and role of community forest associations. It enables members of a forest community to enter into partnerships with the KFS through registered Community Forest Associations (CFA). These partnerships are applicable for both state and/or local authority forests. The associations are registered only if their objectives; composition of their management committee; election procedures; and, purpose for which their funds may be used are considered satisfactory. Members of a forest community and local residents who form such associations may apply to the Kenya Forests Service (KFS) for certain privileges in relation to management of particular forest areas and forest produce rights. It is therefore possible for local communities to directly participate in protection, conservation, and management of a given forest area subject to provisions of a management plan for the forest (World Bank, 2007).

The new act has also granted the Associations some user rights to the forest resource on condition that these rights do not come into conflict with the conservation of the forest. Some of the user rights granted these associations include collection of medicinal herbs, harvesting of honey, harvesting of timber or fuel wood, grass harvesting and grazing, collection of forest produce for community-based industries, ecotourism and recreational activities, scientific and educational activities, plantation establishment through nonresident cultivation, contracts to assist in carrying out specified silvicultural operations, development of community wood and non wood forest-based industries, and any other benefits that may from time to time be agreed upon between an association and the KFS (World Bank, 2007).

Most communities have in the last 3-5 years managed to form associations as expected by the Act. Although a majority of these groups are still in the primary stages of formation, their anticipation in getting involved in PFM remains high and their objectives are clear. Despite this, most are still disorganized while others are not genuinely formed for conservation purposes and still others are driven by self-interest. Some new CFAs have experienced challenges including

cases of mismanagement and disintegration, heterogeneity within members of the associations causing more conflicts; and varying interests and objectives for forming the Associations. It will also be challenging to implement participatory forest management (PFM) in view of the lack of clear mechanisms for benefit sharing and the slow rate to embrace PFM among foresters.

2.2 Achievements and changing roles

The roles of the CFAs have been changing over time from being directly controlled by the Forest Department to a more decentralized system where they are more involved in decision-making. They have further expanded their roles from lobbying to conflict management, fundraising, negotiating with KFS during most of the meetings, initiating rural development and forestry development activities and more importantly developing systems which are introducing equity principles and addressing the needs of the poor and disadvantaged members of the community. These new trends have also led to the formation of splinter groups due to power and leadership wrangles.

The Associations have also pioneered community livelihood projects like butterfly farming, beekeeping, farm forestry initiatives, environmental awareness programmes and eco-tourism facilities which have improved the livelihood of the grass root communities. The initiatives have added value to PFM in a hitherto situation where communities would hardly have got any benefit from the forest.

Currently, there are more than 100 CFAs that are distributed across various parts of the country. Most of these are not quite operational since there are some basic concerns that need to be addressed by Kenya Forestry Service (KFS). For example, forest management guidelines have not been released to all actors and many forest adjacent communities have yet to understand the implication of the new policy. The development of local management by laws and the signing of some forest management agreements with KFS are yet to be implemented. Many organizations-both government and non governmental continue to make efforts to educate communities living adjacent to major forests on the requirements of the new policy and new Act.

3. 0 METHODOLOGY

3.1 Definition of terms

Primary forest association: one or more user groups with rules, policies, and/or guidelines about the forest, some of which users have prescribed for themselves.

Secondary forest association: two or more forest associations that work together to accomplish joint activities and/or objectives with rules, policies and/or guidelines some of which have been prescribed by the secondary forest association.

Tertiary forest association (or parent organization): two or more secondary forest associations that work together to accomplish some joint activities and/or objectives with rules, policies, and/or guidelines, some of which have been prescribed by the tertiary association

3.2 Study Area

Kenya is one of the 5 countries that make up the larger East Africa. It borders Ethiopia to the North, Somalia to the East, Tanzania to the South, Uganda to the West, and Sudan to the Northwest. Kenya lies along the equator and covers a total land area of about 582,650 square kilometers (224,961 square miles). The country's population as per the 2009 census is about 39,002,772 million with a growth rate of about 2.7%. The population density is about 66 persons per square kilometre.

The country experiences two main rainy seasons; the long rains are usually from March to June and short rains from October to December. The months of June and July are usually the coldest. Agriculture is the mainstay of the country's economy and the most common cash crops grown include tea, coffee, maize, beans, wheat, sugarcane, and a variety of fruits and vegetables. Livestock production is also extensive and cattle are mainly kept for dairy products and beef; pigs and poultry for eggs and meat are also common. In the lake region, fishing is largely practices and the Tilapia and Nile Perch are the most common fish species. Tourism is also an important foreign exchange earner.

Over 70% of Kenya is classified as both arid and semi-arid (ASALS) characterized by low biological activity. It is only the highlands forming most of the southwest and central parts that receive sufficient rainfall and are fertile. It is also in the highlands where agricultural production is high.

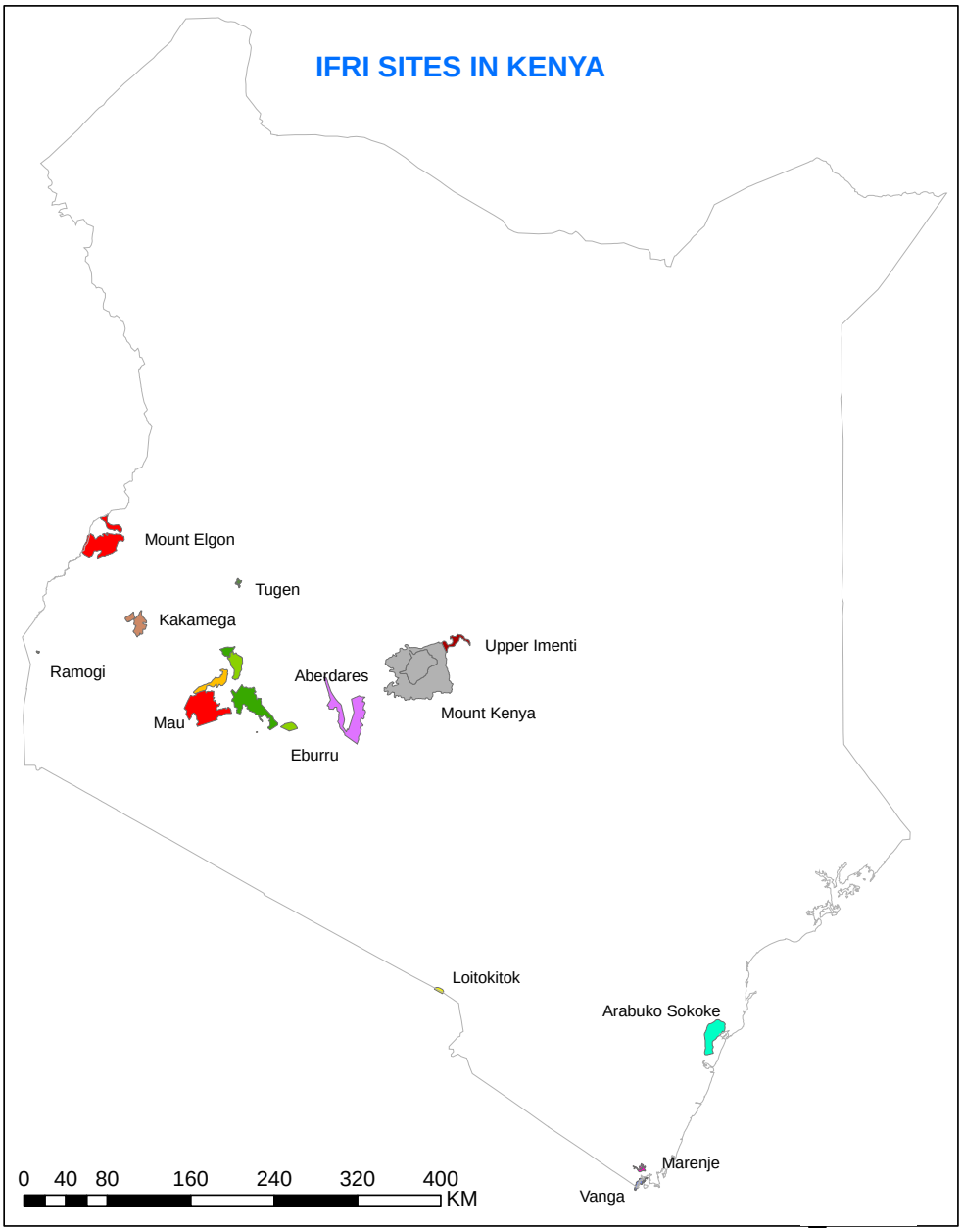
Kenya has a total about 1.64 million hectares of gazetted forestland (Wass, 2000). There are more large tracts of forests outside the gazetted areas which are reserved as trustlands and include national parks, national reserves and private owned forests which cover about 0.5 million hectares. The country's forests are concentrated in the moist central highlands where the human population and agricultural production are also concentrated (Wass, 2000). In the semi-arid region, forests are mainly found on isolated hills and along riverbeds.

3.3 Methods used

The study was conducted using IFRI research instruments. The IFRI program relates forest users and institutions through formal and informal interviews to collect information on numerous entities that influence forest use. Pre-tested IFRI forms were used to collect data on the site and the Associations/ organizations found in different forests across the country. The IFRI site form/questionnaire provided background information on the selected sites while the Association form provided information on structure, formation, objectives, activities, membership, achievements and challenges of the various associations. The IFRI household questionnaire provided information on reasons for joining groups, types of activities and amount of time spent on group activities. Participatory Rural Appraisal methods (PRA) such as focused group discussions and interviews with key informants (group leaders, members, other forest stakeholders) were also used to gather more information on the associations. Several workshops were also organized to facilitate interactions with the community members, foresters, and other key informants in the area and to get their perspectives.

Data was collected from 16 groups/ associations in 11 forests in Kenya over a period of 10 years since 1997 to 2007. The selection of the forests was based on the agro-ecological zones as well as other factors such as their proximity to communities and the level of use by adjacent communities. The selected forests are located in different parts of the country (figure 1) and include Upper Imenti and Gathiuru in Mt. Kenya and Aberdare Ranges all found in the Central part of the country; Kimothon in Mt. Elgon and Kakamega rain forest in Western Kenya; Arabuko Sokoke and Vanga at the Kenyan Coast; West Mau and Tugen Hills in the Rift Valley; Ramogi and Thimlich Ohinga in the Lake Region.

Figure 1: IFRI sites in Kenya



The data collected was analyzed using EXCEL and SPSS packages. Descriptive statistics were applied to describe various groups/associations in the Kenyan Forests and examine their capacity and roles in the decentralization process in Kenya. Capacity and roles were based on activities they had undertaken and achievements made so far within the decentralization programmes.

4.0 RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

4.1 PFM Pilot associations in Selected Forests

The government of Kenya, through KFS and other stakeholders set up pilot sites in selected forests across Kenya to determine the viability of decentralizing forest governance to local communities. Two of these forests, Meru Forest Environmental Conservation and Protection (MEFECAP) and Arabuko-Sokoke Forest Adjacent Dwellers Association (ASFADA) were studied under IFRI. These are also registered with the national Alliance for community forests associations (NACOFA) which is the umbrella body of all the community forest associations in Kenya. Experience from the areas where PFM had been piloted indicates that community involvement is well addressed by the new law. But the challenge is that community, Government and other stakeholders' expectations are not in tandem. Communities in various Participatory Forest Management pilot sites in Kenya have shown that they are capable of carrying out effective forest production and forest protection measures even without the involvement of the Kenya Forest Service (KFS).

The first pilot site located in Mt. Kenya is Meru Forest Environmental Conservation and Protection (MEFECAP) which started in 1998 when communities initiated some participatory forest management activities. They had formed groups aimed at the use, management, rehabilitation, protection, conservation and maintenance of the forest. Some of the groups included forest protection groups, fuel wood collectors, grazing groups, electric fence groups and self-help group with nurseries. These groups were spontaneously formed due to the need to regulate forest use as a result of rampant degradation. The KFS decided to work with these groups in piloting PFM in the forest. These groups later joined to form one umbrella body which has since been registered under the Societies' Act by the Attorney General in anticipation of involvement in the New Act. The association has more than 10,000 members from different affiliate groups involved in the management of the forest.

The association has representation of other stakeholder in its steering committee such as KFS, Kenya Wildlife Service, Ministry of Agriculture, Provincial Administration and the Municipal Council. The steering committee spearheads implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the organization in an advisory capacity. The association has adopted the role of the link between the local communities and the government departments in implementing various activities related to the welfare of the forest.

The second site; Arabuko-Sokoke Forest Adjacent Dwellers Association (ASFADA) is adjacent to Arabuko Sokoke Forest in the coast of Kenya. It started

as a lobbying group in 1997/8 when politicians wanted to degazette part of the forest for resettlement. A few local organizations and individuals lobbied for signatures around the Forest and presented a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to the Minister who stopped the degazettement. ASFADA then transformed into a lobbying, forest management and rural development community organization for communities adjacent to the forest. ASFADA brings together 52 villages with a population of over 104,000 people forming over 300 different user groups around the forest. ASFADA later reorganized its structure to be in line with requirements of the Act and has been working harmoniously with the local administration. It has attained a wealth of experience in forest management through working jointly in programmes with KEFRI, KWS, NMK which include such as Biodiversity Conservation Project, Fence project supported by KFS, KEFRI, NMK, KWS, EU and CDF and a USAID project.

As a result of the exposure to PFM and its principles of involvement of various stakeholders in decision making, the community members in these pilot forests have a comparative advantage in terms of enhanced capacity in leadership, management, and decision making. They have acquired knowledge from numerous trainings and have been exposed to other experiences in the process of implementing projects. The communities also have improved resource mobilization skills, networks and diversified livelihood options such as butterfly farming, eco tourism, and business in non timber forest products. They are more aware of policy issues affecting them and are able to effectively engage in policy dialogue.

4.2 Analysis of association structure in pilot and non pilot sites

Table 1: Existing forest associations/groups reorganize table to pilot and non pilot sites

	Forest Name	Forest group/association	Pilot?	Year formed	Type of association*	Initiator of association
1	Gathiuru (Mt. Kenya)	Burguret river water user association	No	1999	Secondary	Individual
2	West Mau, Kedowa	Country vision	No	1999	Primary	Individual
3	Aberdares Ranges	Geta Region Environmental Conservation Group	No	2002	Primary	user group
4	Thimlich Ohinga	Got Olasi Youth Tree-farming Nursery project	No	1994	Primary	user group
5	Ramogi Sacred Grove	Got Ramogi Alternative Health	No	1999	Primary	Local NGO
		Ramogi Eco cultural and Education Centre	No	2002	Primary	Governmental Program
6	Kakamega Rain Forest	Isukha Heritage	No	1995	Primary	Individual
		Kakamega Community Forest Association (KACOFA)	No	2005	Tertiary	user group
		Kakamega Environmental Education Programme (KEEP)	Yes	1995	Secondary	Individual
7	Kimothon (Mt. Elgon)	Kimothon Non-residential Cultivators	No	2000	Primary	Governmental Program
8	Upper Imenti (Mt. Kenya)	MEFECAP	Yes	1998	Secondary	user group
		Michaka/ Kiringo Forest Conservation Project	No	2000	Primary	user group
		Ribui Kirachene Forest Operation Protection Group	No	1998	Primary	user group
9	Tugen Hills Forest	Sochkei Self Help Group	No	2002	Primary	user group
10	Vanga Mangrove Forest	Vanga community user group	No	2000	Primary	Individual
11	Arabuko Sokoke	Arabuko-Sokoke Forest Adjacent Dwellers Association (ASFADA)	Yes	1999	Tertiary	User group

* Refer to definition of terms in the methods section

Results showed that most (22.2%) of the forest groups/ associations were formed in 1999 followed by 16.7% in 2000/2002 (Table 1). These were formed during this time in anticipation of the New Forest Act which specified the need for

communities to join registered groups for them to be included in forest management and harvesting. Majority (82%) were formed either by individual initiative or by a user group, indicating that these associations are self driven and that members of the communities realize the need to form associations with the aim of sustainable management of the forest. A few, 12% were formed by governmental program to address a specific problem in the area, while another 6% were formed by a local Non Governmental Program.

It is worthwhile to note that the pilot associations were in either secondary or tertiary stages and were compliant with the forest act requirements. This could be attributed to the fact that they were exposed to information on PFM. Most of the associations in non- pilot sites were still in the primary stage, had low membership, and their coverage and area of jurisdiction was limited and localized except for the case of KACOFA whose members had had previous exposure to PFM due to many ongoing activities in the forest by various NGOs. Members in KACOFA were also members of other older associations such as KEEP and Isukha heritage.

About 39% of the forest associations were formed in the period of 1999-2002 (Table 1) in anticipation of the New Forest Act which specified the need for communities to join registered groups for them to be included in forest management and harvesting. Majority of the associations, 82% were formed either by individual initiative or by a user group indicating that these associations are self driven and that members of the communities realize the need to form associations with the aim of sustainable management of the forest. A few, 12% were formed by governmental program to address a specific problem in the area, while another 6% were formed by a local Non Governmental Program.

4.3 Nature of Rules

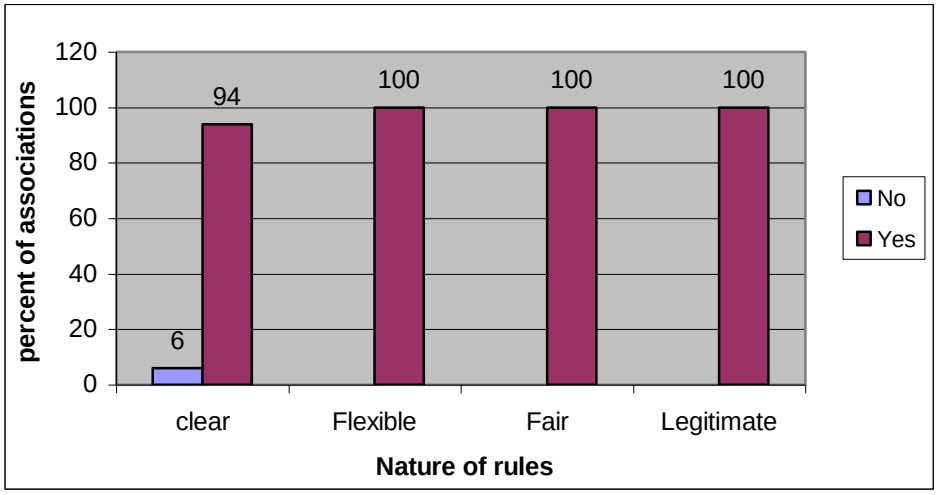
Majority of the members in all the forest associations understand rules of the association. Majority of the members in 83% of the associations understood rules, with 17% having half of the members understanding rules. Results also showed that from the researcher's estimation of the associations' rules, 72% of the associations' rules were easily understood by members. Rules in 22% of the associations were relatively complex but could be understood through learning and experience with only 6% having very complex and difficult to understand rules (Table 2).

Table 2: Complexity of association rules

Complexity of rules	% of associations
No, very complex, difficult to understand	6
Relatively complex, but can be understood through learning and experience	22
Yes, easily understood	72

Members also gave their views about the nature of association rules (Figure 2); almost all the members of the association perceived the association rules as clear (94%), flexible (100%), fair (100%) and legitimate (100%). Since almost all the members perceive the association rules as fair, flexible and legitimate, the likelihood of conformance is high.

Figure 2: Nature of association rules



4.4. Roles and capacity of CFA's in forest management

Data elsewhere (Ongugo et al., 2008, unpublished) showed that there was high dependence of forest adjacent communities on forest products (fodder, firewood, poles and posts, medicinal plants, charcoal etc). This, coupled with the need for involvement of local communities in decision making on forest management issues underscores the role that CFAs can play in reducing communities,

dependence on forests. Results indicated that majority of the associations whether in pilot or non pilot sites were involved in issues relating to forest management and use (Table 3).

Table 3: Activities carried out by associations in the past year

Activity category	Activity	% of associations involved	% of associations not involved
Rehabilitation/ enrichment	Plant seeds/seedlings Other maintenance	72 56	28 44
Harvesting	Harvest forest products	61	39
	Distribute forest products	22	78
	Sell forest products	28	72
	Distribute revenue from sale of forest products	17	83
	Determine timing of harvest of forest products	12	89
	Determine quantity of forest products harvested	17	83
	Determine type of technology used to harvest forest products	30	70
	Determine who is authorized to harvest forest products	36	64
	Determine type of use that can be made of forest products	65	35
	Sell rights to harvest forest products that users can trade with others	8	82
	Rent non transferable rights to harvest forest products	12	88
Monitoring	Monitor forest condition Monitor conformance of rules Sanction rule breakers	82 65 53	18 35 47
Conflict resolution	Arbitrate disputes among local users	62	38
Networking	Interact with higher authorities	81	19

Results from the 16 associations both pilot and non pilot (Table 1) indicated that there is some level of experience on forest management (Table 4). The experience was in coordinating the activities and crafting of rules related in forest management. On rehabilitation/enrichment of forests, 72% had been involved in planting of seeds and seedlings while 56% were involved in other maintenance such as pruning and forest floor clearing. Most of them (61%) were also involved in regulating harvesting of forest products (Table 3). Few were involved in

decision making on harvesting rights such as distribution, sale, revenue collection, regulating timing of harvesting, type of technology to be used among others since the KFS is the custodian of these rights. The few that were involved were either pilot sites or the strong associations such as KACOFA, and KEEP in Kakamega forest. 82% of the associations were involved in monitoring the forest condition, 65% in conformance of rules. A fewer number was involved in sanctioning rule breakers due to limited capacity and support from KFS. 62% were involved in arbitration of disputes. 69% of the associations have experience in networking through interaction with higher authorities. Some had linkages with non governmental and government institutions in terms of access to funds, information and capacity building. These findings indicate that communities have the ability and experience to contribute towards forest management and decision making in the decentralized system. This experience is crucial for CFAs under the new Act and could play as a foundation towards joint collaboration in forest management.

4.5 Leadership in the associations

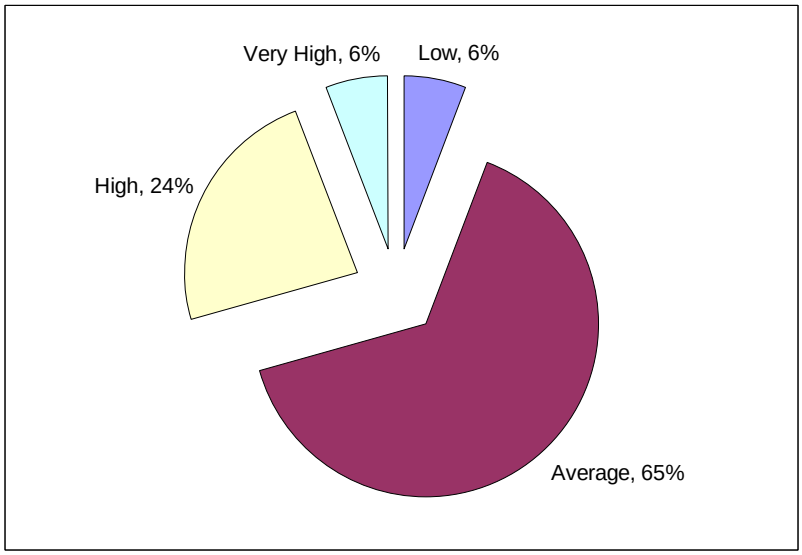
Results indicated that a majority of the groups 94% hold elections regularly while a small percent, 6% hold meetings irregularly. Studies also indicated that officials in most of these associations meet regularly on group functions. 11% met once a week, 50%, once or twice a month, 28% once every 3 months and 11% once a year. The associations are also aware about gender representation in groups and women have been well represented. All the associations had had a female member among the officials at one point; 17% had a female leader but only currently, 39% in the previous 5 years and 44% currently and in the past 5 years.

On office tenure, all the associations conduct elections in choosing their officials with a majority, 94% electing their officials within a fixed period. 6% of the groups had variable elections subject to vote (Table 4). This again shows that leaders of the associations were elected democratically.

Table 4: Office tenure of association officials

	Fixed period elected	Variable, subject to vote
President	94	6
V. President	94	6
Secretary	93	7
Treasurer	93	7

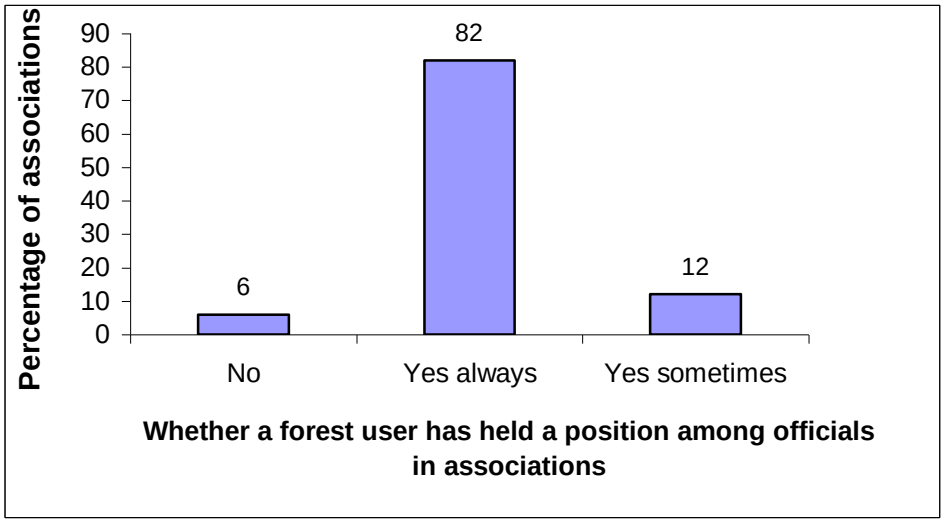
Figure 3: Education level of association officials



On education level[2] of the organization, results indicated that majority of officials (65%) in these organizations had an average educational level. 24% had high level of education. Very few had very high or very low level of education which accounted for 6% in each. Further results (Figure 3) indicate that positions among officials were mainly held by forest users. 82% of the associations always had a forest user among the officials. Only 6% of them did not have a forest user among their officials. These results indicate that the associations identify with issues affecting the forest adjacent communities since they are also users and are better placed to make decisions regarding the forest.

[2] The level of education was determined based on the number of years a person has spent in formal education and is specific to the Kenyan context. For purposes of this study, low level of education refers to 0-4 years; average, 5-8 years; high, 9-12 years and very high, 13 years and above. In Kenya, Primary education is 8 years, secondary education 12 years and University/college and other tertiary institutions, between 13-16 years.

Figure 4: Whether forest users hold official positions in associations



4.6 Conflicts and resolution

Associations face several challenges with leadership being one of them. Results showed that in 76% of the associations, users could remove the officials while 24% could not remove their officials. Further results indicated that in 41% of the associations, officials could not be removed by an external or higher authority, with 59% being removed but only with complaints and substantiated evidence from harvesters. This poses as one of the problems in associations which cannot be able to remove their non performing leaders. Majority of the associations 71%, experienced conflict within their organizations, with only 29% claiming that there was no conflict within their organizations. However, all of them had mechanisms for resolving conflicts (Table 5). Among the conflicts experienced in these associations are as a result of misappropriation of funds and competition for meager resources, leadership wrangles, conflicting interests and lack of commitment

Table 5: Conflicts and conflict resolution in associations

	Percent of associations experiencing conflicts and conflict resolution	
	No	yes
Existence of internal conflicts?	29	71
Presence of mechanisms for resolving conflicts?		100

Further results indicated that the conflict resolution mechanisms included, resolved their conflicts through face to face meetings 65% and internal

committees 24% set to handle such issues. Only 11% resolved their conflicts through arbitration by external bodies. This indicates the maturity and experience of the organizations in managing their own affairs.

4.7 Finances and sourcing

Results indicated that majority of the groups/ associations in Kenya get their funding mainly from membership contribution, 56% and voluntary contribution, 39% (Table 6). Some groups/ associations got their funds from other sources, 6% such as selling of seeds and seedlings among others. Their single most important source of finances for the past year was membership fees, 47% followed by voluntary contribution of funds and funds from development agencies both of which accounted for 18%. Voluntary contribution of funds and membership fees also scored highly as the most important source of finances for the associations even in the past 5 years. This infers that these associations/groups depend highly on the goodwill of its members and that the members were committed to supporting their associations.

Table 6: Finances

	% of the associations' major sources of income					
Source of funds	**voluntary contribution of funds**	**membership fees**	**development agency**	**sales of forest products**	**Aid from external agencies**	**other**
Source of funds	39	56				6
Single most important source	18	47	18	12		6
Single most important source past 5 years	17	58		8	8	8

Further results indicated that 64% of the groups/ association could rely on contributions from members or its user group or other funds raised locally even without any funds from external agencies. 21% could not meet their expenses while 14% could support themselves by sales from forest products. However 43% of the groups spent their income on office keeping activities such as buying stationery while 7% spent it on salaries of hired personnel. 28% of the associations spent most of their income on maintaining and improving their forest resources.

These results indicate that these associations are not well funded especially by the government and Non governmental organizations. This could be attributed to the fact that they do not have the capacity to source for funds or that they are not well networked to be able to reach potential donors.

4.8 Other roles

All associations showed high capability of keeping and maintaining records of various items which is important in management. All associations also had

linkages with higher authorities and perceived themselves as cooperating in terms of relating to other forest governing structures. 44% perceived themselves as cooperating, but independent of other organizations rules and regulations while 56% perceived themselves as cooperating jointly in determining rules and regulations.

4.9 Challenges in implementing PFM

Results from the studies indicate that the challenges facing the associations in the pilot and non pilot sites are similar only that the level of complexity differ depending on the challenge. For instance, on organizational complexity, the challenge in the non pilot sites was more due to lack of adequate capacity while those in the pilot sites were mostly grounded on power and benefit sharing wrangles (Table 7). Associations from both sites had problems of equitable distribution of power and resources within the new law and inadequate technical capacity albeit at varied levels. Despite the high level of awareness, effective management of the forests requires some level of technical skills which is still a limitation to local communities even those in the pilot sites. For instance, these communities are expected to develop forest management plans to be approved by KFS.

Other challenges affecting associations in both sites include emergent problems such as an overwhelming interest in group formation by large population and unpredictable evolution of the groups over time. These have increased incidences of conflicts within and between groups on who is to be recognized under the new law leading to formation of splinter groups. There is also an increase in overdependence on the forest resources by even larger numbers of people due to various factors among them climate change.

Table 7: Challenges in implementing PFM in various sites in Kenya

Challenges in implementing PFM	**Pilot sites**	**Non pilot sites**
Organization complexity	Complexity of implementation in different forests types (natural, plantations) Fair responsibility and benefit sharing challenges exclusion and inclusion definitions External interference Diversity of origins, cultures, languages and aspirations bringing mistrust and suspicion among members	Lack of defined structure and hierarchy at local, regional, and national levels exclusion and inclusion definitions External interference Inter and intra-organizational power wrangles
Conflict of interests	Elite capture and self serving leadership Conservation versus exploitation Existing capacity versus necessary capacity	Communal rights versus individual interests Prevailing attitude versus required attitude conservation versus exploitation Lack of clarity on what is expected Policy makers and professional perception versus community understanding of the groups objectives
Group historical problems		Over reliance on external help Inadequate funding Misappropriation of funds
Capacity	Inability to follow a sustainable utilization patterns Lack of commitment especially in the long term	Inability to follow a sustainable utilization patterns Mediocrity

5.0 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Results indicate that community forests associations have a major role to play in the decentralization process of forests in Kenya and can contribute to both successful management and livelihood options.

The CFA's that had been selected as pilots have proven to be capable of contributing to management of forests through the knowledge and experience they have acquired over time. Members of the CFA are community members who possess vast indigenous knowledge on the tree species in the forests, their uses, abundance and diversity. But many also lack technical silvicultural knowledge. There are a few community members who may be retirees who worked in the forest sector and therefore have some technical knowledge that can be useful. The authors recommend that the government take advantage of local knowledge and the existing expertise in areas of training, research and eco-tourism. The government has limited resources and the existing CFA's can be used to create awareness and build capacities of other community members in selected forests.

The results indicate that most CFAs had been formed with the hope that the government would put in place mechanisms for sharing benefits in the forest. But so far, there are still no clear guidelines on how communities would share in the tangible benefits such as revenue accrued from the forest that the government and other stakeholders benefit from. The authors recommend that an agreement should be reached between the various stakeholders on equitable distribution of resources based on their contribution.

A potential source of conflict is the prevailing attitude of the community versus the attitude required if PFM implementation is to ensure sustainability of the forests. The communities have a sense of ownership for the forestland and its products. If the rights to the forestland were at their discretion, most community members would convert it to agricultural production that is perceived to be more profitable land use. The Kenya Forests Service should work with the CFA's towards changing prevailing community attitude towards the forest if they are to be effective in management.

Finally, CFAs have the fundamental principles of adaptive collaborative management by virtue and potentials of their resiliency. They have the potential to transform forest management and apply democracy principles of forest management. The legal formation, registration and personalization should be streamlined and code of conduct drawn. Reforms should first concentrate on restructuring the governance systems of the KFS to enable adaptive management for grassroots level institutions.

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