

Making Participatory Forest Management work in Kenya



Policy Brief
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Introduction

Participatory Forest Management (PFM) is part of a wider initiative to devolve power of management and decision making from the government to the local communities. Participatory Forest Management (PFM) implementation in Kenya is at early stages with majority of the sites being in their fifth year. Emerging PFM scenario in the country is a continuum of two extremes. The first is where communities are in joint agreement with the Kenya Forest Service (KFS) in state owned forests with varying degrees of responsibility and decision making. This is a modified form of Joint Forest management (JFM). The second scenario is where communities traditionally own and manage the forests; an approach which is known as Traditional Community Based Forest Management (TCBFM). The benefits and implementation strategies vary from one forest to another. These experiences provide important lessons for successful implementation of PFM in Kenya.

Problem statement

Forest Act 2005 provides for community involvement in managing forests. PFM implementation in Kenya started in 1997 on pilot basis. To date PFM is being implemented in over 40 forests. PFM implementation is facing several challenges and constraints. These include institutional arrangements that are not well developed and existing ones which were formed without due regard to the law; participation and involvement of stakeholders is low, cost and benefits are not equitably distributed and there are undefined partnership arrangements. In addition, inadequate sensitisation and awareness on the requirements of PFM implementation coupled with high Stakeholder interests and expectations on benefits of PFM remain a challenge. The call for urgent actions to address the challenges. This policy brief will contribute to making PFM work in the country.

Key research findings

- **PFM Kenyan Context:** PFM in Kenya is at its early stages of implementation with the oldest being 10 years in Arabuko-Sokoke forest (ASF). PFM is being developed within a framework of non-extractive forest use. The benefits from integrated development activities mostly outside the forest. PFM in the Kenyan context has the potential of contributing to poverty reduction and improved forest management but the initial establishment costs are very high. Communities have the capacity to equally manage the forest effectively for ecological and livelihoods benefits as shown in Loita and Dida; what is critical is having in place accepted management regulations.
- **PFM costs and benefits:** The communities are incurring the highest costs with the government receiving high gross benefits. At the household level, the high costs are being borne by women and the youth whose access to benefits is determined by men who are the decision makers. The costs of establishing Income Generating Activities (IGAs) are being borne by NGOs and community. This trend requires to be adjusted to bring in more government support. IGAs which are the major sources of PFM incomes are capital intensive thus their initiation requires the participation of several partners as shown in Kakamega and Arabuko Sokoke Forest (ASF). PFM success is directly related to benefits which accrue from the Income Generating Activities (IGAs).
- **Participation and involvement in PFM:** The motivation to participate in PFM is driven by anticipated benefits. The well-off individuals in the community are the ones participating in PFM and they have a better chance of controlling the process and hijacking benefits thus denying the disadvantaged members of the community access to benefits. The youth participate mainly in patrolling as in Kakamega, Loita and Dida. IGAs with high returns like eco-tourism and bandas are dominated by the youth and men. It was evident that with better regulations all social classes have the potential to participate and benefit from PFM equitably as shown in Dida and Arabuko-Sokoke forest. Level of community involvement was very high in forests where the PFM process was facilitated by the civil society compared to KFS led sites.
- **PFM implementation:** The enthusiasm to apply PFM as a management approach is raising unrealistic expectations with officers perceiving PFM as the solution to all management problems. The

recommendations

The following recommendations will enhance the implementation of PFM in Kenya:

- **Capacity building of all stakeholders:** There is need to develop a comprehensive capacity building programme for all stakeholders realizing that PFM in Kenya will succeed by accessing benefits outside the forests. This needs skills which requires other stakeholders participate in.
- **Institutional arrangements and policy:** It is appropriate to enhance the capacity of existing local community institutions like Njuri-ncееke and Oloibon rather than creating a parallel management institution. There is need to develop adequate legislation to ensure that the process is inclusive. This may require having an affirmative action so as to include women, youth and other disadvantaged members of the society especially the poorest of the poor.
- **Poverty reduction:** There is need to actualize the PFM potential to reduce poverty through initiating IGAs like eco-tourism, beekeeping and institutionalizing good governance.
- **PFM feasibility study:** There is need to delineate the forests where PFM is feasible in the country.
- **Benefits and costs:** There is need to have deliberate interventions to ensure equitable distribution of costs and benefits with a focus on the poor, women and the youth. Provide attractive incentives that compensate for the cost of implementing PFM.
- **Affirmative action:** There is a need to develop systems that deliberate target the poor of the poor, women, youth the very old, HIV/Aids, migrants, labourers and squatters to participate in all stages of PFM implementation.
- **Stakeholder participation and involvement:** there is need to ensure the process is inclusive.
- **Monitoring PFM impact:** Stakeholders need to Develop indicators and criteria for assessing PFM impact on livelihoods and forest status

Therefore, to make PFM work in Kenya (Institutionalizing PFM), there is need to realize that PFM initiation is a longterm expensive process taking the case of CFA formation. This call for Government and other partners support to guide the process to completion. The process requires different financial options such as loans, grants, donor support and revolving fund. Further PFM should be integrated with other development programmes to realize its outcomes.



Man and son filling tubes with soil.

communities also perceive PFM as the solution to poverty. Poor coordination of PFM implementation is further complicating the process. The main causal factor is failure by officers, communities and other stakeholders to have a common interpretation of the PFM guidelines, and the Forest Act

- **Ownership status and PFM regulations:** Forest ownership type does not determine the success of PFM implementation; the key factor is for KFS to devolve management rights, roles and responsibilities to the community forest association. This calls for development of inclusive site specific forest management regulations.
- **Stakeholders and partnerships:** in forest sites where the process is controlled by a single stakeholder the community are likely to incur high transaction costs as evidenced in Upper Imenti and Kereita forests. This scenario is also rife for institutional manipulation by the strong organization. In sites with multiple stakeholder participation, the community had higher chances of claiming their rights as evidenced in Dida.
- **Institutional and policy issues:** There are institutional and policy issues which require urgent attention. Local governance institutions like Oloibon in Loita and Njuri-nceeke in Lower Imenti are facing management challenges. The structural and institutional arrangement for both communities and KFS are not harmonized. There was more than one community organization per station against the recommended one per forest station.
- **Governance:** the process was well coordinated in forest sites with civil society facilitation. In these sites community organizations and the other stakeholders were well trained. Women participation was noticeably higher in civil society facilitated sites. Adequate awareness made the communities advocate and lobby for benefits, higher participation and involvement.
- **Livelihood status and PFM:** PFM has potential to improve the livelihood status of forest adjacent communities. However, the benefits may not be fairly distributed across all social classes. Within the household there was also disproportionate access and distribution of benefits. The very poor, women and youth were the most negatively impacted.

Policy



Firewood collection in Kereita Kiambu District