Progress toward strategy 4: Agreeing and promoting REDD standard and FSC standard for timber.

Over the last six months, national FSC standards have been approved by stakeholders and by external validators. This process has been facilitated by WWF and FIT. A policy brief in Swahili for community members on national FSC timber standards. The brief was printed and shared with MJUMITA members and other participants at the MJUMITA annual general meeting.

The FIT team are also working hard to promote national environmental and social standards for REDD (Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and forest Degradation). A policy brief in Swahili was developed and was shared with MJUMITA members with a view to broadening their understandings of the REDD standards and thereby enable them to engage in the debate on the standards.

Lessons learned

1. In most of the areas where the project is working there is little effective collaboration between local communities and local government in addressing forest governance issues.
2. Communities have a better understanding of the forests in their areas than many of the DFOs and forest managers and are willing to monitor their forests if they are involved and supported.
3. Some community members understand the network of the illegal loggers in their areas but hesitate to report them to the appropriate authorities because they think their lives will be threatened and/or because they think that the relevant authorities are either involved or unwilling to take action.
4. Of the limited budget available to FBD, little is invested by the government in conserving forests. Instead most of the budget is spent on activities which do not result in improved forest management.
5. Pushing for accountability through media, works.

Way forward

There is still a long road ahead of us in terms of improving forest governance. In the coming six months the project will be expanding its operation geographical to involve three more zones. These are: southern highlands, western and central zones. The project will carry out forest condition monitoring in 4 forest reserves and will return the results of previous surveys to stakeholders around Uzungwa Scarp, the Dar Greenbelt forests and Rondo. The FIT team will complete the analysis of the village level governance monitoring and will develop and implement a system that enables MJUMITA members to share the results of the governance monitoring in village assembly meetings and from there to bring about positive changes in village forest governance practice. The project will also be supporting communities to address forest related governance challenges; receiving reports of forest crimes from communities through our hotlines and linking communities with appropriate authorities and working closely with media to report forest crimes going on in different forest reserves in the country. In terms of media, watch out for our documentary on Ruviu South due to be broadcast in February and for our TV and radio spots on Uzungwa Scarp and Ruviu South which will be broadcast in March and April.

About Forest Justice in Tanzania

Forest Justice in Tanzania (FIT) is a three year project (2011-2013) that aims to promote improved governance and increased accountability in Tanzania’s forest sector. The initiative is a partnership between the Community Forest Conservation Network of Tanzania, known as MJUMITA and the Tanzania Forest Conservation Group (TFCG). The project is working through four inter-related strategies, which are: Monitoring forest governance and forest condition; Enforcement promotion; Research, analysis and communication; and Agreeing standards. The project is financed by DFID through the Accountability in Tanzania programme (Act). For more information about the project, read our special edition of the Arc Journal, available at http://www.tfcg.org/publications.html

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Improving Forest Governance

Weak governance in the forestry sector has contributed to a national annual deforestation rate of around 1% per year and the marginalization of rural communities in forestry management despite a national policy that supports participatory forest management. Over the last six months the Forest Justice in Tanzania initiative has made significant progress in documenting and publicizing the impact of forest crimes on the condition of nationally important forests. Through participatory monitoring, the project has also gathered in-depth information on governance issues at village level that threaten sustainable forest management.

With the establishment of the Forest Justice zonal hotlines, community members are reporting forest crimes and governance shortfalls in their areas. In several communities, this has resulted in forest laws being enforced and collaborative actions between community members and District officials. Publicity on the rate of illegal activities has also prompted action from the Forestry and Beekeeping Division to invest in enforcement in the reserves that visited by FIT.

Summary of achievements during this reporting period:

- Systematic surveys documented high rates of charcoal production in Dar’s greenbelt forests and the presence of large (2000 people) charcoal camps within Ruviu South FR. Combining survey results with remote sensing analysis indicated that, at current rates of deforestation, we will lose Kazimzumbwi Forest altogether by 2014. These messages were communicated through radio, television and print media. In December FBD sent in teams to remove the charcoal camps which have been reduced by approximately 50%.

- Forest governance monitoring results at village level revealed that, village governments and village natural resources committee are not keeping records regarding natural resources management and do not share information transparently with other villages. The results pinpoint priority areas for change at community level.

- 43 incidents of forest crimes were reported on the project hotlines and the project assisted in making follow up with the responsible authorities in 24 cases.

- Results of our study to assess the status of JFM in the country show that 14 out of 15 interviewed communities had developed and approved their forest management plans, by-laws and joint management agreements but that these had remained unsigned/approved by the government for an average of 7 years. In sharing these results with FBD/TFS, its officials said that they are currently reviewing JFM guidelines and looking at how the Tanzania Forest Fund can break the deadlock on the issue of benefit sharing in joint forest management.

Forest Justice in Tanzania

What we achieved between July and December 2011
Progress on Strategy 1: Monitoring forest Governance and forest condition

Monitoring forest condition

Ruvu south forest reserve will be completely deforested by 2034 at the current rate of deforestation. From our biodiversity and disturbance research and satellite image analysis of the forest, it was revealed that the forest is heavily cleared for charcoal making by gangs who camp inside the reserve. In order to prompt action by the relevant authorities on illegal logging in Ruvu South, we arranged for 3 reporters to visit the forest. They produced 2 articles and two stories on television news. Prompted by this media coverage, FBD allocated 15 million shillings and removed several charcoal camps from the reserve. The FBD manager also offered to renew cooperation with communities.

In Uzungwa Scarp Forest Reserve, the FJT team found illegal logging and hunting causing serious damage to the forest and its biodiversity. Populations of primates and duikers appear to have crashed as a result of hunting pressure. Pressure on the forest is highest close to the villages. Despite the pressure, the team recorded populations of Abbott’s duiker, a small antelope endemic to Tanzania, and the Iringa red colobus. Six community members including MJUMITA members from around the respective forests participated in the surveys in order to exchange knowledge.

Monitoring forest governance

In terms of monitoring forest governance, during this reporting period our focus was at the village level. The village governance ‘dashboard’ aims to measure the strengths and weaknesses of community forest governance with a view to improving it. In this reporting period, forest governance was assessed in 120 villages. The results are summarized below:

- 60% of the villages reported that forest destruction is decreasing especially in areas practicing CBFM; this suggests that participatory forest management is working to some degree in Tanzania to enhance forest management.
- Decision making processes and financial management are not transparent at village level. Village governments and village natural resources committee are not keeping records regarding natural resources management. Additionally, most villages were not able to find or did not have their forest management plan, forest bylaws, meetings minutes and other VNRC documents (i.e patrol book, expenditure, revenue obtained from fees and fines etc).
- 13 % of villages hold village assembly meetings the requisite 4 times per year; 13 % hold 0 meetings with the remainder of the communities who were interviewed, holding 2 to 3 meetings.

These results were shared with MJUMITA members during their annual general meeting, in November 2011.

Progress toward strategy 2: Enforcement promotion

Forty-three forest crimes were reported on our zonal hotlines by community members including MJUMITA members. Of these 43 incidents, 24 cases resulted in action. Some of these reported cases were addressed by the village governments using their bylaws whilst two cases were addressed at the district courts. The project supported MJUMITA members to make follow up on the cases taken to court. In most cases, reports made to the Districts on illegal forest activities did not result in any action. In some cases such as Kibaha and Lushoto, District Forest officers released those accused of carrying out illegal activities and even returned their equipment to them. Community members expressed discouragement at the District’s response to their efforts.

Progress towards strategy 3: Research, analysis and communication.

FBD Budget Analysis

The project is committed to identifying the obstacles that prevent the forestry sector from operating in a more effective and equitable way. In light of the Government of Tanzania’s commitment to the ‘Open Government Partnership’, we carried out research and analysis on the budget of the Forestry and Beekeeping Division and the Tanzania Forest Service in order to better understand the budgeting process within FBD and to identify how much is being allocated to manage the forests. From this exercise we learned that:

- It is difficult to get hold of ‘published’ budget data and much more transparency is needed in order for citizens to engage effectively in budget discussions;
- The formats that are used in the published budgets make it difficult to relate budgets with activities or targets;
- FBD does not receive all of its approved budget and the budget cuts are passed on disproportionately to the regions;
- The budgeting process within FBD does not prioritise in-situ forest management for nationally important forests.

These results are planned to be shared with the government and parliamentary committee for land, environment and natural resources before the next budget parliament session.

Status of JFM in Tanzania

Whilst Tanzania has been lauded for its policy on participatory forest management, joint forest management, where communities manage government reserves in collaboration with local or central government, has stalled over the issue of revenue sharing. The project conducted a study to assess the current status of JFM in the country using 15 villages described by MNRT in 2008 as having operational JFM. The results showed that all of the interviewed communities had developed and approved their forest management plans, by-laws and joint management agreements. On average they approved the plans 7 years ago and submitted them to either FBD or respective districts. Since then only one agreement was signed by FBD with a copy returned to the respective village. However, even the village with the signed agreement has never received any revenue from the government for its participation in the conservation of the government forest. Regardless of all the challenges, communities stated that they are still willing to engage in JFM with the government.

In order to understand the Government’s response to these findings, we presented them to key staff in the Tanzania Forest Service including the PFM coordinator, the Coastal Forest Coordinator and the Assistant Director for Forest Development. In general the response was that they are working on this issue and are looking at how it could link with the Tanzania Forest Fund. In addition, the PFM coordinator said that they are considering including district councils as a third partner in joint conservation of the central government forest reserves.

In addition, the FIT team linked up MJUMITA members and other community members with journalists to publicise the ongoing problems in Pugu, Kazimzumbwi, Udzungwa scarp and Ruvu south forest reserves.