



Governments are Decentralizing Responsibilities for Forest Management in Africa, but are Rural People able to take on their Rights?

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Hypothesis



- Tenure & secure rights to land are important, but not enough to improve livelihoods & sustainably manage forests
- Other conditions are needed:
 - Greater sharing of power (equity, gender);
 - Ability to organize, have rules, & sanction;
 - Ability to process & value add; and
 - Ability of rural people to competitively enter market.

Waves of Change in Forest Tenure in Africa



- Early indigenous (forest dwellers) communal forest tenure disrupted & dislocated by migrations;
- State as master of land & forest (colonial & post colonial); and
- Post 1990's Forest reforms & decentralization.



Create complexity of tenure & decentralization regimes – with overlaps (customary-statutory), & conflicts – over 35 countries in Africa with community forestry on “books”

Who Owns Africa's Forests?



Forest Type (Ha. Mill)	Central Africa	French W. Africa	Eastern Africa	Southern Africa	Totals
Public (Gov)	368.3 (99.8%)	42.0 (97.6%)	127.4 (96.8%)	76.2 (36.0%)	613.9 (81.3%)
Public (reserved community & indigenous)	0.6 (0.2%)	0.8 (1.8%)	1.6 (1.2%)	121.3 (57.3%)	124.3 (16.5%)
Private (community & indigenous)				3.6 (1.7%)	3.6 (0.5%)
Private (individual & company)		0.3 (0.6%)	2.6 (2.0%)	10.4 (4.9%)	13.3 (1.7%)
Total	368.9	43.1	131.6	211.5	755.1

Sources: FAO data sets, FRA 2005; & with some assumptions & designated functions for southern Africa

Some Assumptions for Southern Africa



- Use of designated functions – where rights to use, managed & control resources are better integrated (so more than tenure) - CFM
- Public or government controlled – refers to formal Government Forest estate (can include JFM)
- Forests designated for production – mainly public, but with progressive transfer to private sector, which can include communities – ownership of land with Gov, but rights to use privatized
- Most low productive forests community owned – forests with multi-purpose functions – recognition varies
- Other functions (sacred, on farm, rich patch) – most likely under community *de facto* control

Tanzania – an example



Forest type	Area
Central Forest Reserves (managed by central gov.)	12.3 mill Ha (36.5%)
Local authority Forest Reserves (managed by District)	1.6 mill Ha (4.8%)
Village forest reserves (managed by village), area increasing with registration	2 mill Ha (5.9%)
Private forests (private sector)	61,000 Ha (0.18%)
Forests on general lands (non-reserved, <i>de facto</i> community)	17.7 mill Ha (52.6%)
Sacred, traditional forests (ones “formally known”)	370 Ha
Totals	33,661,370 Ha

Source: Blomley et. al. 2008

Various forms of decentralized forests



- Village & community forest reserves in Tz
- Community & decentralized forests in some West African countries (Mali, Burkina Faso, Senegal) – “terroire villegois”
- Joint (collaborative) forest management (Tanzania, Uganda, Cameroon) – with state



In general – rights to less valuable forests &/or products devolved, not high value forest products (except trials in Ghana, Tanzania); varying levels of planning & restrictions imposed

Contestation – widespread, but hidden



- Rarely recognized officially– so difficult to analyse – except through case studies, e.g. Uganda;
- Contestation over conversion for other forms of land use, grabbing; or to assert customary rights; &
- More extensive “lower” level contestation in terms of “illegal” access – for products

Are rights secure?



- In decentralized forest management – extent & scale to which Government can withdraw rights undermines decentralization (e.g. Central Africa)
- If communities have ownership – can they make best use of their rights? – to manage, process, value add? (*plans, permits, taxes, rules*)
- Attainment of rights often delayed (even if conditions met) by “lack of willingness”

Equity & Gender



- Its much more than “community”! – whose rights & responsibilities *within* a group
- Women often “*de facto*” providers at farm level, yet with little power in management
- Legislating not enough without implementation (which may result in power struggles)
- Effects of culture & tradition on gender & rights of different groups (often excuse to hold onto power)
- Elite capture (from within or external) – esp. If resources increase in value

Do devolved rights reduce poverty?

- Poverty & forests often go hand in hand in a “vicious cycle”
- Contribution of forests to GDP, National accounts negligible, as data not captured in statistics – even if contrib. significant at local level
- Inability to add value & market (beyond subsistence) mean real value of rights reduced

Some Economic Data

Country	Forests & GDP	Econ Value	Other values
Sudan	10%	\$650 mill p.a. Gum Arabic \$80 mill p.a.	66% pop involved with forestry. 70% depend on fuel wood
Tanzania	3.3% (& 10% of exports)	2.8% value of agric. Sector; In Shinyanga \$14 p.p. p.m. for 2.25 million people (800+ villages)	92% depend on fuel wood
South Africa	2% or 1.7% (FAO)	\$4,674 mill p.a. – 55% of which NTFP	Over 325,000 employed
Namibia	6%	Devils claw worth \$10 mill p.a.	89% rural use fuel wood (20% urban)
Uganda	2% (Min finance) or 6% (Forest sector)	Forest business worth \$165 mill p.a.	90% fuel wood, & 90% herbal remedies

Key Opportunities



- **Tenure rights** – important but ability to negotiate, defend & benefit from
- **Equity & Gender** in context of elite capture & male conservatism, but can create space for democratization
- **Minor or high value products** – Moves to higher value forest products?
- **Shift from Government to Private sector** – can create opportunities for partnerships with communities
- **Role of JFM/CM** – community stake in reserved estate – but high transaction & planning costs
- **Climate change** may enhance importance of sector & need for enhanced community rights

Some Threats



- **If decentralized** – Is there adequate support (technical, financial, management) for communities to use opportunities in policy & law?
- **Often very high transaction costs** (time, plans, rules, regulations, permits, taxes, delays, bribes)
- **Role of customary rights** (recognized?) – evictions, contestation, encroachment
- **Forests low on agenda** – therefore less focus in PRSPs (Governments, donors)
- Population pressures & displaced peoples

Some Conclusions



- Official data not reflect policy rhetoric of community forestry –with exceptions
- Improved forest tenure not yet result in improvements in livelihoods – nature of resources devolved, community support mechanisms in place
- Focus on official data underplays richness of community forests
- Lack of responsible treatment of forest sector in national accounts undervalues its importance
- Forest projects short term, yet forest management long term (investment, management, support, markets)
- Civil society role in facilitating change & translating rhetoric to action

So:



- Its more than devolved rights, more than communities managing forests;
 - Lies in ability of rural communities to invest & enter the market; and
 - Requires longer term investment & removal of perverse incentives.
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- Goes beyond tenure & management plans to Sustainable Forest Management as business for communities