

PARTICIPATORY FOREST MANAGEMENT (PFM) INITIATIVES IN MILAWILILA AND MANGALA FOREST RESERVES: Achievements, Problems/Conflicts and Lessons learnt

E. R. Moshi

The Uluguru Mountains Biodiversity Conservation Project

P. O. Box 312, Morogoro Tanzania

Tel: +255 23 2613122; Fax: +255 23 2613766; E-mail: emoshi2@yahoo.co.uk

Background Information

Milawilila and Mangala are lowland and local government owned forest reserves (FRs) with areas of about 14 and 29 hectares, respectively. They are administratively located in Mkuyuni and Matombo divisions, about 60 kilometres from Morogoro town traveling to south on Morogoro - Matombo road (Fig. 1). The two forests are adjacent to each other only separated by half a kilometer distance and are geographically found at 06°58' S and 37° 45' E. Climatically they both receive oceanic rainfall and temperatures estimated at 1400 – 1800 mm/year and 23°C - 28°C for rainfall and temperatures, respectively. Milawilila Forest Reserve (FR) covers a gentle slope between 250 – 400 m.a.s.l, while Mangala covers a hill at between 300 – 675 m.a.s.l. Though both forests are of lowland type they have different natural vegetations. Milawilila FR has a closed forest type while Mangala has two types of vegetations: miombo woodland and dry evergreen forest with a lot of ferns due to human destruction. Human impacts on these two forests before management interventions were introduced were very high in both FR. There was forest encroachment for mountain paddy cultivation, debarking of trees for bark that are used as medicines and logging (pit sawing) of valuable tree species like *Milicia excelsa*, *Albizia versicolor* and *Khaya anthotheca* as well as commercial hunting of *Colobus* monkeys (*Colobus angolensis*) in the past but due to the management interventions initiated by the Uluguru Mountains Biodiversity Conservation Project (UMBCP), forest encroachment and other illegal activities have almost stopped. The forests are presently under the Participatory Forest Management (PFM) program whereby the adjacent communities (villages) are involved in managing the forest reserves. This article looks into PFM initiatives that have taken place in both Milawilila and Mangala FRs pointing out the achievements attained, problems or conflicts encountered and lessons learnt by the implementing project.

PFM Initiatives

It is obvious that PFM has been accorded high priority both in the National Forest Policy (1998) and the National Forest Programme (NFP) in Tanzania. The policy is also complemented with the legal and institutional frameworks that support PFM implementation. According to this national forest policy all the forest adjacent communities are obliged to be involved in managing the forests that are in their vicinity.

The Uluguru Mountains Biodiversity Conservation Project (UMBCP), which is one of the environmental conservation projects in the Uluguru Mountains, has not been working outside that framework. The project implements its activities inside and outside the Uluguru North Catchments forest reserve. Among other things it works with local communities residing adjacent to forest areas to join hands in their forest conservation efforts. With this intention of establishing strategies that involve and secure active participation of local communities in forest management, the project initiated PFM

activities in Mangala and Milawilila FR in year 2000 in its first phase. Mangala FR is totally located in one village namely Ludewa while Milawilila FR is surrounded by Mifulu and Milawilila villages which are separated by Uмба River. These villages are also found in two different divisions namely Mkuyuni and Matombo, respectively. During phase one of the project, activities were implemented in Mkuyuni division only. This created some problems in Milawilila FR as one of the two adjacent villages was outside the project area and could not implement project activities. In this case PFM was firstly introduced to Mifulu village only. This made one part of the forest adjacent community participating in management of the forest while the other part was not. Arrangements were then made to involve the other village in the project activities particularly in PFM.

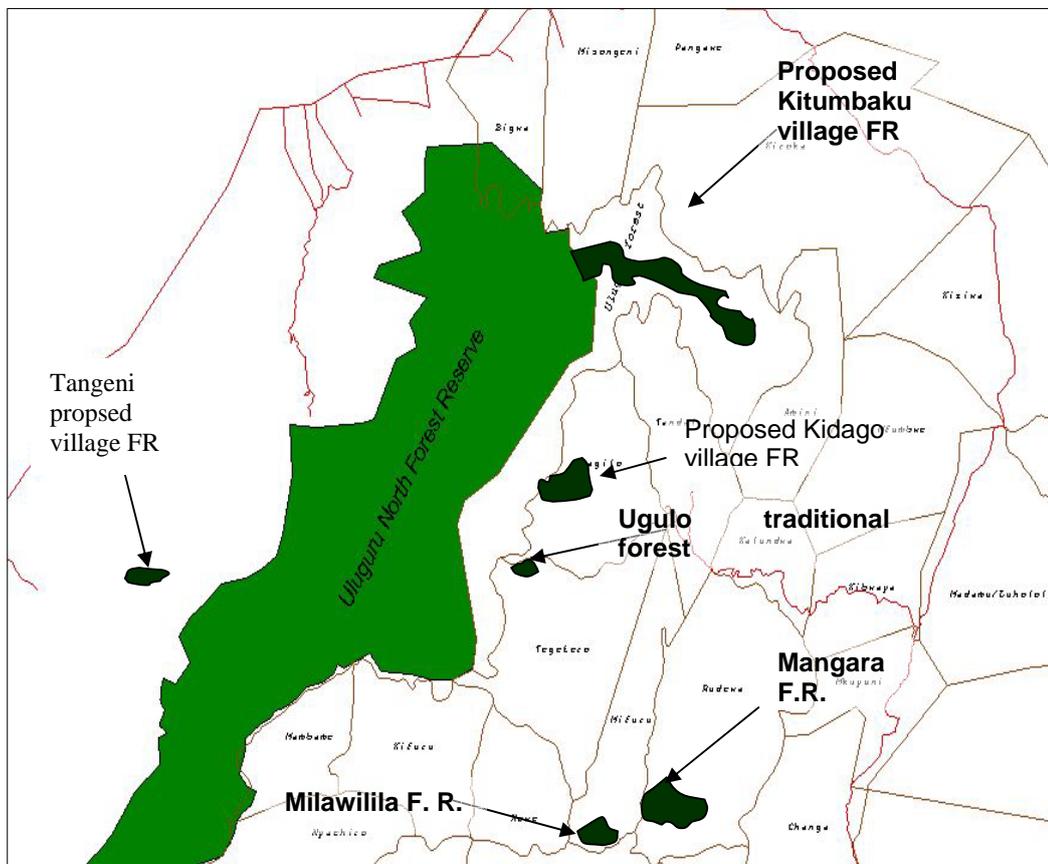


Figure 1: Map of Uluguru North Forest Reserve showing the locations of Milawilila and Mangala Forest Reserves.

How was PFM initiated?

Sensitizing and educating communities adjacent to Mangala and Milawilila FR on environmental conservation and new forest policy issues through meetings, seminars and workshops initiated PFM. Village leaders also made an exchange visit to Babati and Lushoto districts to learn from their counterpart on how they were implementing the PFM activities. Being educated and sensitized all the communities around these two FRs accepted to put the new forest policy in practice by initiating PFM activities in the forests in question under the facilitation of UMBCP.

Achievements

- Established tree nursery for nurturing different tree seedlings for boundary planting and restoring the degraded (open forest) areas as well as for distributing to villagers for planting in their farms. Presently, about 90% of the open areas in Mangala and Milawilila FR have already been restored and tree boundary established.
- Established environment committees (VEC) in all the three villages that are adjacent to these forests;



Figure 2: Part of the Milawilila forest reserve showing the trees planted in the boundary to prevent further encroachments.

- Resurveying of the two local government forest reserve (*i.e.*, Milawilila and Mangala) was done in 2004. When these two forests were gazetted in 1914 by the Germans colonial administration had by then areas of 13 and 35 hectares, respectively. However, due to encroachment, the area after the survey for Mangala forest reserve was found to be 28.5 ha while that of Milawilila was almost intact;
- After resurveying the forests, permanent boundary for each forest was established by planting trees to prevent further encroachments (Fig 2);
- In order to ensure

implementation of the participatory Forest Management the project facilitated villages to develop by-laws that could operate at community levels for the management of natural resources found in the villages. All the by-laws were approved by the village authorities and are in use although only one village by-laws have been endorsed by the District Full Council;

- The respective villages undertook participatory Forest Resources Assessment (PFRA) in Mangala and Milawilila FR in 2005 (Fig.3). The results of the analysis assisted in the development of management plans for those forests all of which have already been approved by the respective village general assembly meetings. Since the project has managed to facilitate formulation of village environmental committees, preparation of management plans and by-laws, the Memorandum of Understanding (Agreement) is the last step to follow before these management plans could be tested for one year;
- Distributed education materials to enhance awareness creation among PFM stakeholders. Materials distributed include leaflets, posters, calendars, forest policy and legal materials, brochures, etc.
- People from the district offices as well as a good number of WCST members from the project area had been involved in these PFM activities so that when the project phases out, they would be in position to collaborate with the VECs to perpetuate the activities sustainably.



Figure 3: Environmental committee members from Milawilila village doing the participatory forest resources assessment in Milawilila FR.

Problems/Conflicts

Problems or conflicts encountered as we were proceeding with the process of PFM included the follows: -

- i) The forest areas are far from the office and mountainous to the extent that we are facing difficulties in keeping appointments in time (especially attending meetings, and seminars during rain seasons or tree planting events);
- ii) Wildfires around these FRs are still occurring and sometimes the trees planted in the forest boundaries are burnt hence, setting back project's efforts. Action taken against people who are punished according to set village by-laws;
- iii) There has occasionally been poor attendances of meetings in Mifulu and Ludewa villages some of which are very important for making decisions or endorsement of certain documents;
- iv) There have been some conflicts/misunderstandings between the VEC members and village leaders and normal villagers on executing forest management activities like boundary clearing, tree planting, etc. Normal villagers had bad notion in their minds that the forests are belonged to village leaders and VECs so they refused to participate in any forest management activities. This conflict was resolved by educating them in village meetings. Right now awareness has been created handling the impounded illegally harvested forest products in the villages. These misunderstandings have been a set back to the JFM process.

Lessons Learnt:

Weak law enforcement:

Although by-laws have been formulated in the villages still the experience indicates that they are not fully being put in practice. There are some village or ward executive leaders who are cushioning some of the illegal activities for their benefits so it is still a challenge to us and to environmentalist at large.

Use of multidisciplinary approach

Conservation of natural resources is the concern of many stakeholders so in order to achieve a common goal; stakeholders should collaborate in every step of any undertaking (*i.e.*, planning, implementing and monitoring together). So in our project we have succeeded in achieving the PFM indicators because we worked in collaboration with other stakeholders who are working in the same area. Our experience indicates that PFM needs interaction with many stakeholders particularly government officials at all levels (Villages, Wards, Division and District), extension staff of different sectors, elders, local leaders, institutions (ethnic groups) etc.

High negotiation and transaction costs in PFM

PFM is a process that takes long time and tedious one because it needs a lot of lobbying and negotiations with different stakeholders including farmers, business people, elders, politicians, etc. PFM being a long undertaking and process it is also very costly in terms of negotiation and transaction. The project has incurred a lot of costs for running village meetings for negotiation (Fig. 4) while the local communities had a lot of transaction costs for attending those meetings.



Figure 4: Ludewa village assembly meeting for endorsing the management plan for Mangala FR.

Establishment of Conservation/Farmers Group Networks

Formation of farmers/conservation group networks has been very helpful in our project. We have farmers groups and village environment committee networks whose members meet every month to discuss issues pertaining to their successes and failures.

Concluding note

PFM is a long and costly process that needs patience and tireless spirit. It also requires involvement of various stakeholders in every stage. Importantly, to secure sustainability of PFM in Milawilila and Mangala FR the project should not focus on conservation alone but on economic

incentives for communities as well. This, therefore, calls for initiation of livelihoods improving activities in the project area (it is a challenge).