

## **2.2.2 Successful community-based management of two miombo forests (Duru-Haitemba and Mgori) in northern Tanzania**

### ***Objectives and approach***

According to Wily (1997), it was for both protection and productive purposes that Duru-Haitemba and Mgori Forests in northern Tanzania were, with others, earmarked for conservation nearly a decade ago. Making the forest pay for itself was by the nineteen eighties a favourite maxim of aid donors in the forestry sector, and with the help of Swedish funds, the typically long and expensive preparatory process of survey demarcation and inventory was launched. In each case the intention was to secure remnant forest against diminishment by future expanding settlement, through the routine deployment of Forest Guards to the new reserves, and especially to secure a source of revenue for the cash-trapped local governments (District Councils), from the issue of licences for timber and pole-wood extraction, and permits for grazing and other forest uses.

### ***Results and analysis of reasons for success or failure***

By deploying Guards, villagers felt that the forests were no longer their concern. The fact that Forest Guards could be persuaded to issue permits-legally or illegally- to clear fields in the forests, burn charcoal, fell timber and other activities which elders had not themselves allowed, made their resolve only stronger. In both Duru-Haitemba and Mgori Forests, therefore, large amounts of timber began to be illegally extracted, game hunting multiplied to unsustainable levels, including poaching of elephants for ivory and encroachments by a steady stream of pioneer farmers from neighbouring areas increased. By eliminating the local sense of proprietorship, no matter how weakly this was backed up in statutory law, or implemented on the ground, government also eliminated local guardianship, or recognition in the wider community that the forests were not public property in the “free rider” sense. Indeed, a reversal of local responsibility into a sometimes actively antagonistic mode, both local people and outsiders regarding the forest as there for the taking, and government as “fare game”. Even those who were dismayed at the degradation-taking place (and in Duru-Haitemba concerns that forest degradation was already affecting stream flow from the ridges, emerged after a mere two or three years) made no attempt to help government Foresters identify illegal users among themselves or the more commercial offenders from usually more distant areas.

To ensure sustainable exploitation and management of these two forests, villagers offered the way forward. Village leaders (initially the Duru-Haitemba villages) insisted that they, could be active and responsible forest managers and their first claim was to evict encroachers and ban damaging users. With its hands and budget tied, local Government (the Babati District Council) agreed to let them try. The only condition was success; that Duru-Haitemba remains as uncultivated forest and if used, be used in a sustainable, non-damaging ways. Later, in the case of Mgori Forest, which was still seen as having more income-generating potential, an additional caveat was made, indicating that should commercial utilization take place in the future, the Government would receive a share through a simple system of taxation on forest products sold in the official markets.

The Forest Guards were withdrawn, and the village communities provided with facilitatory assistance to decide precisely how they would manage the forests themselves. The main sentiment of villagers at this stage was one of mixed amazement, anxiety and determination, aptly expressed in their fear that “We have a great responsibility. Now we cannot blame Government if our forest disappears. Our children will blame us if we fail”. It is of note that without exception each community promptly banned obviously damaging activities, including those which they had so forcefully insisted were “essential forest uses” at the time the forests were to be owned and managed by the government; Government Foresters watched as encroachers were evicted, charcoal production, ring-barking and forest clearing banned, and the mainly non-local loggers “encouraged” to leave the community. An increasingly nuanced range of regulations were devised and implemented through which fuelwood, pole-wood, and other common requirements were able to be sustainably extracted. Most villages zoned their “Village Forest Reserves”, closing off the most valuable or most damaged areas to consumptive use, confining permitted uses, including often grazing, to certain areas or months of the year. With their forest springs now protected against livestock, several villages rehabilitated the environs with tree planting. Finally, forest guarding was actively instituted, involving selected young men in the community, thereafter exempt from providing other work inputs in the village, and “rewarded” with a share of the fine payments levied on offenders. It is logical that the prime incentive for these communities to actively manage forests is their sense of “ownership”, and control over the use and future of the resource.

In the kind of forest management arrangements that Duru-Haitemba and Mgori represent, all partners may be seen to benefit; Government has lost the burden and costs of fielding Forest Guards and management, and the considerable costs of conflict with local populations.

The villagers themselves gain not only prime rights over the resource but dramatically heightened capacities, again that spills into other spheres of village organization and livelihood. Some villages have used the organization of Village Forest Management to tackle grazing and swamp land management. The forests themselves offer visible evidence of gain; un-regulated in-forest settlement or cultivation, charcoal burning and rampant timber harvesting have all largely disappeared. Boundaries are not only stable but in some cases extended, where a community has added to the area under protection, a trend that stands in stark contrast to the demands for reduction in the size of the proposed Government-owned forest reserves. Damaging forest use of all kinds has dramatically declined to an extent that most villages are looking for additional ways or rewarding their village Forest Guards, than through a share of income generated by fines.

In the more degraded Duru-Haitemba the return of understorey shrubbery and grasses, and the return of bee swarms to the forest, is heralded as a welcome sign of improvement in the forest condition. The return of wildlife in Mgori, is similarly observed. Meanwhile, both Duru-Haitemba and Mgori forests enjoy a level of protective vigilance they have not seen before, either prior to, or during their intended gazettement as forest reserves. For the last 30 months, more than 200 young village men routinely patrol and watch over one or other part of the two forests. This is undertaken at zero cost to Government, and with a level of vested interest in its survival on the one hand, and with a level of local accountability on the other, that no

Government regime could sustainably provoke. Perhaps it is this feature more than any other that signals the advantages of community-based forest management especially cheap-and effective.