

POLICY BRIEF

REPLENISH MILLIONS OF KENYAN HOUSEHOLD'S GRANARIES THROUGH FOREST RESTORATION

Contributions of forests to the big four agendas"

The Forest Management and Conservation Act, 2016 provides for participatory forest management (PFM) and acknowledges community participation in forest management through registered Community forest associations (CFAs). Despite the existence of the PFM regime and CFAs (CFAs), the forests degradation has been on increase. The implementation of the forest law has been ineffective and rhetorical rather than an attempt to public participation and decentralization of rights and benefits (Mutune et al., 2016). Thus, it is now a fact that after paying little attention to meaningful community participation in forest management the effects are being felt. There is low inclusivity of the CFAs by Kenya Forest Service (KFS) in forest management that could significantly affect forest conditions and livelihoods.



"When we replenish the earth, we restore our own dignity particularly food security" ~Maathai, 2010

The exclusion of the CFAs in meaningful co-management of forest resources has occasioned continued destruction of these vital resources. Consequently, forest destruction increases pressure on a population grappling with hunger, water and power shortage. Despite the existence of a legal framework on participatory approaches in forest management, deforestation is high and largely attributed to opaque processes for licensing loggers and allowing outright illegal logging.

Given current forest conditions, Kenya requires extra attention and action for its population to reduce water scarcity, food insecurity and improve resilience in the face of unpredictable climate changes. For instance, The Mara Rivers whose source is the Mau forest is drying up with devastating effects. The livelihoods of hundreds of thousands of pastoralists and farmers including the tourism sector will be jeopardized for instance by drying of the Mara River occasioned by destruction of the Mau Forest.

Despite the existence of a legal framework on participatory approaches in forest management, deforestation is high and largely attributed to minimal operationalization of the forest law. The exclusion of the CFAs in meaningful co-management of forest resources has occasioned continued destruction of these vital resources. Yet, forest destruction increases pressure on a population grappling with hunger, water and power shortage.

Forests are crucial in maintaining water quality and quantity and protecting soil from erosion. Water and soil are chief resources that support agriculture which employs about 80 percent of Kenya's population. Besides, forest provide the bulk of fodder for

livestock production, fuelwood for domestic and rural industry uses, including energy for drying major agricultural crops. Forests offer building materials for farm structures and homes for millions of people in both rural and urban areas.

The five major water towers regulate 75 percent of the country's renewable water supplies in the country. Recognizing the consequences of forest degradation, the government established a taskforce to address the matter urgently. Its report recommended a ban on logging for next three years. The ban on logging is necessary in the short term but not sufficient in the sustainable management of forests. Other measures particularly meaningful participation of FACs in forest restoration and rehabilitation is part of the most important panacea to ensure food security to the more than 3.4 Million Kenyans presently and acutely food insecure (Kenya Food Security Outlook, June 2018 to January 2019). Meaningful community participation in forest management and restoration becomes inevitable if the government of the day is to meet its big four development agenda that are highly depended on forest conditions.

Forest restoration is in line with the Kenya government's prioritization of food security (climate change mitigation and water availability), manufacturing (energy, water and raw materials for manufacturing agricultural commodities like tea, coffee and, livestock) and health (water and sanitation) as key political agendas. It is paramount to promote models that not only restore forests but also meaningfully involve community in forest management. The meaningful involvement includes taking FACs in decision making over forest resources. Community involvement in decision making and their realization of direct tangible benefits from forest resources not only exalts forest restoration but also ownership by the FACs.

Deforestation trends

Deforestation deprived Kenya's economy of 5.8 billion shillings (\$68 million) in 2010 and 6.6 billion shillings in 2009, far outstripping the roughly 1.3 billion shillings injected from forestry and logging each year (UNEP, 2012).

Kenya has a forest cover of 7.4 percent of its land area, compared to around 12 percent 50 years ago. In 1963, forest covered 10% of land in Kenya and by 2006 that dropped to 6.6%. The Kenya Forestry Working Group has estimated that Kenya will lose US\$300 million each year by deforestation. Between 2000 and 2010, deforestation in the key water towers amounted to an estimated 28,427 hectares, leading to reduced water availability of approximately 62 million cubic meters per year (UNEP, 2012). For instance, the Mau Forest, the most important water tower lost up to 107,000 hectares of its 416,000 hectares through illegal allocations between 1990

and 2001.

Forest degradation has triggered scarcity of resources and resulted to conflicts between government and FACs. Recent conflicts have been witnessed at the Maasai Mau, Cheregani and Mt. Elgon forests. Forest destruction precariously exposes women and girls as they walk long distances to fetch fuel wood. About 82 percent of households use fuel wood for cooking and 1.2 per cent for lighting (Kenya Integrated Household Budget Survey Population-KIHBS, 2017). However, Kenya is only able to meet about 70 per cent of this demand through sustainable domestic supply. The annual deficit of 12 million cubic meters is met by formal and informal imports plus unsustainable extraction from natural forests (KIHBS, 2017). The situation can be reversed through forest restoration and meaningful involvement of the FACs in forest management.

Deforestation trends

The FMCA, 2016 provide the basis for a new perspective on forest ecosystems management for improved forest conditions and livelihoods. The FACs become forest co-managers with KFS through membership in registered CFAs. Community participation in forest management is paramount in addressing climate change challenges, rehabilitation and restoration of forest resources for increased forest cover. Participation of CFA members needs incentives and technical support mostly from the KFS and external programs.

Currently, the CFA members are mostly involved by KFS in providing labour in forest related activities like shamba system, aftercare of tree seedlings and scouting which are paramount for forest conservation but have minimal tangible benefits to communities. Usually CFAs have lamented exclusion by KFS from decision making over forest resources. Yet the involvement of FACs in decision making and gainful nature-based income generating activities e.g. farm forestry, beekeeping, ecotourism are useful means through which FACs can increase their livelihoods while enhancing the capacity of forest ecosystems to produce goods and services. For instance meaningful involvement of CFA members can restore key water towers like the Mau Forest Complex whose total economic value (TEV) is 110 billion (GoK, 2009). The TEV of Mau Forest can fund the 120km Nairobi-Naivasha SGR line whose total construction cost is estimated at Sh153 billion.

When CFA members are given complete autonomy and devolution of power, CFAs can become viable local institutions for sustaining forests. When managed sustainably forests have the potential to absorb about



Figure 1. Forest destruction occasions fuelwood scarcity that precariously exposes women and girls who deserve dignity and equality (source: Standard Newspaper, July 2018).

one-tenth of global carbon emissions. Moreover, the widely accepted principles of good governance such as accountability, transparency and rule of law, which have been lacking in centralized forest management regime could be largely present, effective and having a strong influence on CFAs functioning for sustainable management of forest resources.

Therefore, there is a need for stronger efforts to ensure better functioning of the CFAs. That is, for the CFAs to become responsive in forest conservation, a further decentralization of decision making and autonomy are believed to be an important step forward here, because part of current problems with lack of interest in the CFA relates to lack of real decision-making power. This may involve efforts to ensure capacity building of CFAs members and tangible benefits to through value addition on forest products.



Figure 2. Alternative income generating activities among CFAs for better livelihoods and restored forests



Policy Message

- i. Involve CFA members in decision making over forest resources.
- ii. Invest on capacity building of CFA members on leadership, accountability and transparency.
- iii. Invest on the alternative nature-based income-generating activities to ease financial constraints among the forest-adjacent communities.
- iv. Provide clear and pragmatic guidelines on how CFAs engages with KFS that could significantly affect forest conditions and livelihoods.



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