

Strengthening Voices for Better Choices in Tanzania

Helping stakeholders overcome the obstacles to better forest governance locally and nationally

Forest governance in Tanzania

Tanzania's forests and woodlands cover 33.5 million hectares, or about 40% of its land area. They are dominated by *miombo* woodland, a species-rich savannah ecosystem which is also a valuable source of goods and services for the country's mostly poor rural population.

Only two-fifths of Tanzania's forests lie within forest reserves or national parks. The rest is unreserved and largely unprotected forest growing on public land. The National Forest Policy of 1998 and Forest Act of 2002 explicitly recognised the need to bring these unreserved forests under the control of local communities as village forests, managed through various community-based regimes known collectively as participatory forest management (PFM). By 2006, PFM was operating or being established in over 3.6 million hectares of forest spread across 1,800 villages.

Despite its progressive policy framework aimed at decentralising forest management, encouraging PFM and ensuring forests contribute to national poverty alleviation goals, Tanzania's overall performance in forest governance is still relatively poor. The country's deforestation rate is one of the highest in East Africa, driven by uncontrolled agriculture and livestock expansion. Hardest hit are the unreserved forests, which face greater pressure for land and fuelwood from surrounding communities.

Illegal, irregular and unsustainable forestry activities are rife in Tanzania. Growing market demand, improved infrastructure, weak law enforcement, corruption and other factors have contributed to a surge in illegal



Logs confiscated by village scouts in Mtanza Msona, Rufiji, Tanzania. Photo © IUCN

logging and trade. The social and economic impacts of these activities are serious: central government alone is estimated to be losing timber revenues of US\$58 million a year.

Tanzania's government has introduced many measures to reduce illegality in the forestry sector, including regular periodic bans on harvesting in natural forests. In the absence of effective controls, however, these have had only a limited impact. Moreover, they have largely failed to tackle the underlying causes of illegality, such as corruption, conflicts of interest, a lack of transparency and accountability, low awareness and limited government capacity. Only by addressing these will Tanzania be able to realise the potential of its forests to improve livelihoods and drive equitable growth.

Strengthening voices for better choices

In response to these challenges, the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) launched *Strengthening Voices for Better Choices* (SVBC). Financed mainly by the European Union (EU), this global project aims to test and promote improved governance arrangements that will engender sustainable and equitable forest management.

In Tanzania, one of three project countries in Africa and six globally, SVBC is pursuing this goal in Rufiji, a district in the coastal region of Pwani (see map overleaf). Rufiji takes its name from the Rufiji River, the largest in Tanzania, which flows through the district into the Indian Ocean. Forests cover more than 40% of Rufiji and support an important timber industry. Most are un-

reserved forests on public land, however, dependent on surrounding communities for management and subject to high rates of illegal harvesting and degradation.

Since 2006, SVBC's approach has been to build the capacity of stakeholders at different levels to diagnose and deal with forest governance problems. At the community level, SVBC is working with 12 villages to implement environmental management plans, improve awareness and understanding of forest and land laws, and revise village by-laws regulating the use of natural resources. Ultimately the project aims to give villagers the confidence, knowledge and ability to assert their rights and play a meaningful role in decentralised forest management.

Locally, SVBC has engaged with Rufiji's District Council to support its forest management programme. This covers, amongst other things, establishing village forest reserves and approving their management plans and by-laws. Strategic lobbying for support from District Councils is key to improving forest governance at the local level.

Nationally, SVBC has been actively involved in supporting Tanzania's Forestry Working Group (TFWG), formed in 2005 to address advocacy and awareness raising on critical forest management and governance issues. The project and its partners have also been supplying financial and technical support to the national Federation of Community Forest Conservation Networks, popularly known as MJUMITA.

From the outset SVBC has sought to establish and maintain a strategic partnership with the Forest and Beekeeping Division (FBD) of Tanzania's Ministry of Natural Resources and Tourism. A central element of this partnership is the project's participation in annual joint reviews of the National Forest and Beekeeping Programme (NFBKP).

Besides these partners, SVBC is collaborating with a range of Tanzanian and international organisations to realise its objectives. These include the Tanzania Forest Conservation Group, Tanzania Natural Resources Forum, Tanzania Chamber of Commerce, Industry and Agriculture, FAO and CARE International. The project has



Community training in forest laws, Rufiji, Tanzania. Photo © IUCN

also been working through IUCN's Tanzania Country Office to facilitate national consultations in support of the East Africa FLEG process. These form part of a region-wide consultation facilitated by IUCN in partnership with the East African Community (EAC), with support from the government of Finland, the World Bank and the African Forest Research Network.

SVBC's achievements

Forest governance assessment As in other project countries, SVBC began by commissioning an assessment of the obstacles to better forest governance in Tanzania and possible ways forward. This focused on the pilot sites in Rufiji, drawing on inputs from villagers, council members and local forestry officials. The findings of the assessment were reviewed at a national workshop in 2007, organised with FBD and the Tanzania Forest Conservation Group. The study's lessons have also been presented at meetings of TFWG and the multistakeholder Informal Discussion Group on the Environment.

Village and district forest governance

capacity Participatory planning with project stakeholders in Rufiji has identified implementation of village environment management plans as a local priority. Introduced under IUCN's earlier Rufiji Environmental Management Project (REMP, 1998–2003), these plans are designed to promote sustainable management of natural resources. As such, they are a means of empowering local communities to play a meaningful role in decentralised forest management.

In response, SVBC has trained villagers from 12 pilot villages in natural resource

management laws and the procedures required for preparing and reviewing village environmental by-laws. Local schools have been involved in this training as they are important conduits for new information flowing to the village level.

The project has also been supporting enforcement of by-laws through training and equipping of village monitoring teams. This support has enabled village scouts to establish regular and effective patrols of their village forests.

Before villagers can fully participate in PFM, they need support and approval from district authorities for demarcating their reserves and preparing plans and by-laws. Districts are also responsible for drawing up their own by-laws to provide a framework and guidance for village-level management. SVBC is currently facilitating the preparation of by-laws by Rufiji District Council. These are expected to be in place by the end of the project in 2009.

This work is being coordinated through the district's Environment Management Team, another product of REMP. Originally set up to coordinate interventions across forestry, agriculture, fisheries and other natural resource sectors, the team was disbanded after REMP ended but has since been re-activated by SVBC.

National FLEG dialogue The national component of SVBC's activities in Tanzania provides a strong link between policy and practice, ensuring that important lessons feed into the national governance dialogue.

The project has played a leading role in raising awareness of FLEG issues through the TFWG, the Informal Discussion Group

The Tanzania Chamber of Commerce, Industry and Agriculture (TCCIA) successfully organised the private sector FLEG forum in collaboration with IUCN. It was the first time that business representatives were invited to such an event, and the response was fair. We are ready to continue coordinating such forums, and hope that the process will be a continuous one.

—Magdalene Mkocha
TCCIA

on the Environment, and national FLEG consultation workshops for government, civil society and the private sector. SVBC's work on village-level governance led MJUMITA to make forest governance the theme of its 2007 annual conference. This meeting produced many valuable perspectives on governance from MJUMITA's members.

SVBC has created further space for governance issues through its strategic partnership with government. In 2006 the project took part in the first annual joint review of the NFBKP, giving it a direct entry point for engaging in national forest governance reform. The review concluded with a workshop at which SVBC was able to present its work on forest governance in Tanzania. Reflecting these contributions, the review report stressed the need for Tanzania to pay greater attention to forest governance issues.

SVBC later participated in the second joint review of the NFBKP in 2007.

National-regional FLEG linkages One recommendation of the 2006 NFBKP review report was that Tanzania demonstrate a commitment to the Africa FLEG process by signing the declaration adopted at the Ministerial Conference in Yaoundé, Cameroon, in October 2003 (Tanzania was not officially represented at the Conference).

This has yet to happen, but as a member of the EAC Tanzania is participating in the East Africa regional FLEG process (EAFLEG) launched by the Community to implement the 2003 declaration.

In support of EAFLEG, IUCN has since 2006 been facilitating national multistakeholder consultations to prepare member countries for negotiating a regional action plan. Towards the end of 2007, IUCN and its partners in Tanzania organised three round table meetings for civil society, businesses and government respectively. This process allowed a large number of different stakeholders to understand the background to the EAFLEG process and its relevance to Tanzania, and to discuss key national governance issues and actions.

The consultations have led to improved coordination of national efforts, including SVBC, and have provided a basis for more substantive official national engagement in the EAFLEG process.

Future activities of SVBC

SVBC is currently implementing some of the recommendations from the national FLEG consultations. In particular, the project plans to facilitate training of forestry officials and business representatives in the laws, pro-

cedures and guidelines for harvesting and trade in forest products.

The project is also supporting discussions between the forest administrations of Zanzibar and mainland Tanzania on harmonising their laws and policies governing forest products trade. Legal gaps between the two jurisdictions have paved the way for illegal trade not just between the mainland and Zanzibar, but also between Tanzania and other parts of the world.

At the pilot level, the project is working closely with Mtanza Msona village in Rufiji to help it meet the legal and procedural requirements for village forest harvesting. Once Mtanza Msona starts harvesting, the resulting benefits should both strengthen the incentives for good governance and have a

Through SVBC, communities in Rufiji have become familiar with Tanzania's natural resource laws and policies; they have developed village natural resource by-laws; and they have established village monitoring teams to control forest use and prevent illegal harvesting. The provision of monitoring tools and equipment such as bicycles and binoculars has given community members a strong incentive to protect their forests.

—Anthony Z. Sangeda

FAO Netherlands Partnership Programme, Rufiji

positive demonstration effect on surrounding communities. The example set by the village will also help to show how Tanzania's policy on PFM can work in practice.

SVBC will help seven villages surrounding Rufiji's Ngumburuni Forest Reserve to manage their village forests and develop a



LEGEND

	SVBC pilot area		Closed evergreen lowland forest		Closed deciduous forest		Open grassland
	International boundary		Submontane forest (900–1500 m)		Deciduous woodland		Sparse grassland
	Regional boundary		Montane forest (>1500 m)		Deciduous shrubland with sparse trees		Swamp bushland and grassland
	River		Mangrove forest		Open deciduous shrubland		Croplands (>50%)
	National capital		Mosaic of forest and croplands		Closed grassland		Salt hardpans
	Regional capital		Mosaic of forest and savannah		Open grassland with sparse shrubs		Waterbodies
							Settlements

Land cover map of Tanzania showing the location of Rufiji, SVBC's pilot area. Land cover is based on the Vegetation Map of Africa, prepared under the Global Land Cover 2000 Project (<http://www-gem.jrc.it/glc2000/>).

joint management system with the District Council. Once operational, this approach will serve as a model for improving forest governance through a combination of community-based forest management and joint forest management.

Lastly the project will document the lessons learned over the course of implementation for sharing with policy makers, communities and the private sector in Tanzania and further afield.

SVBC contacts in Tanzania
IUCN Tanzania Office

iucndar@iucn.or.tz

Guido Broekhoven

Senior Forest Governance Officer

guido.broekhoven@iucn.org



**INTERNATIONAL UNION
FOR CONSERVATION OF NATURE**

FOREST CONSERVATION PROGRAMME

Rue Mauverney 28

CH-1196 Gland

Switzerland

forests@iucn.org

Tel +41 (22) 999-0261/3

Fax +41 (22) 364-9720

www.iucn.org



Aerial view of the Selous Game Reserve on the western border of Rufiji, Tanzania. IUCN Photo Library © Jim Thorsell



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