

The performance of externally funded joint forest management projects in Tanzania
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Being overwhelmed by environmental problems including forest degradation, Tanzania launched the National Forest Policy of 1998. The policy among other things has the statement to allow local people to be involved in the management of state owned forests. Since then, Externally Funded Joint Forest Management (EFJFM) projects have been initiated in Tanzania under the belief that forest resources will be sustainably managed and the local communities will meet their forestry related demands without degrading the resources. However, it is not clear to what extent this has been succeeded. This study used the case studies of the Rufiji Mangroves and Ruvu Forest Reserves; projects implemented under the Management of Natural Resources Programme (MNRP) supported by NORAD to assess its performance after a number of years. Household surveys, physical observation, Focus Group Discussion and literature reviews were the research methods used in this study. The result revealed that EFJFM projects did well during the time when they were supported by donors, but with the phase-out of support, they were overwhelmed by several problems. These include lack of incentives to local communities, poor relationship between government workers and local communities and lack of responsibilities from some of JFM stakeholders. As a result, VNRCs participation has ceased, DFoB officials have cut-off communications with villagers. The consequence of this has been the increase of illegal activities 'to an alarming levels leading up to haphazard forest degradation. Low incentives, arbitrary decisions from the government side, poor relationships existing between communities and forest officials, unclear and poorly implemented JFM agreements are some of the reasons mentioned to have negatively affected the performance of EFJFM projects in the study area. While this is happening, on the other side, community dependency in forest resources is still very high in relation to its supply. However, the study revealed that, communities are willing to participate if the government sincerely intends to involve them. The study concluded by saying that JFM has been faced with a number of structural, administrative, strategic and operational problems which negatively affects their performance. On that bases it is recommended that alternative economic opportunities should be found for forest-adjacent local communities; that there should be clear cost-benefit sharing mechanism; that stake holders should be clearly told about their roles, rights and responsibilities with regards to JFM; and that creative strategies be designed to deliver alternative livelihoods to local communities