

Increased capacity to CSOs and Communities in Monitoring Social Accountability

Policy Forum facilitated training on Social Accountability Monitoring (SAM) to various groups including councillors and district staffs, CSOs members and citizens in Rufiji, Kilwa and Kibaha districts to empower communities to participate effectively district governance based on clear understanding on their right to social accountability.

SAM training attracted 43 participants (Male 27, Female 16) where a good mix of participants from the Local Government Authorities (LGAs), Councilors, CSO's and communities provided an opportunity for interactions and experience sharing. SAM empowered local communities to demand for explanations and justifications on issues related to income and expenditure management at district level.

Subira Juma Mndili - Secretary General for the Forest Network in Ruvu South (Shirikisho la Wakulima na Watetezi wa Mazingira Msitu wa Ruvu Kusini-SHIWAMARU).

Salum demonstrated a clear understanding of his responsibilities on conserving forest resources in his village. He received Mama Misitu Campaign (MMC) as a positive challenge in ensuring community members understands their accountability on conserving their resources. Initially, Mr. Salim believed Government was the only body responsible with forest management. "Forest resources were not important to me; I used to see officers from the district doing patrol, apprehending poachers and taking their resources including sacks of charcoal, bicycles. Everything was taken to the district and nothing was left in the village," he said.

"Theories of MMC have changed my thinking, judgement and practice", he said. Through Social Accountability Monitoring training, which was conducted by Policy Forum, Salum has realised his accountabilities on sustainable forest management. He is among the active members of the committee, responsible with implementing environmental village by-laws such as participating in patrolling the forest and apprehending whosoever will be in the forest without the notice from the village. Soga village has successfully entered into informal agreement with the Government. 20% of the revenue accrued from the forest resource remains in the village for development activities and 80% goes to the district. Forest resources have become one of the sources of income.

The analysis of the district annual progress reports in Kisarawe (2010/11) revealed an apparently delay in gazetting six CBFM in Kisarawe district due to inability of the district council to approve Village by-laws. On the other hand it was noted that there is absence of sustainable plans of replacing distorted forests by planting trees. During a follow up visit SAM committee found only 32,150 seedlings that were planted in the district nursery which is far below the 3,000,000 seedlings targeted by the district Councils.

Other lessons include inability of the District Councils to allocate funds for forest management activities despite increased revenue from forestry resources.

SAM findings uncovered that in 2010/11 Tshs. 261,332,872 equivalent to 96.8% of expected collections was collected from forest resources but nothing was re-invested in the forest sector in Kisarawe district.

Field findings during SAM further acknowledged that there are no updated harvesting plans in Kisarawe District and issuance of harvesting permit are being done without proper coordination as to where harvesting should be done. During field visit in Mafumbu and Sofu village the team learned on increased illegal logging in these villages despite the fact that legal harvesting of timber resources has been prohibited due to land conflicts.

District Natural Resource Officer for Kisarawe confirmed that some un-faithful government staff are colluding with business people to continue harvesting forestry resources in areas not recommended by harvesting committees something that needs community awareness to address the challenge.

Other issues noted during SAM process in Kisarawe include un-attended boundary conflicts which has demised the morale and efforts taken by communities in governing the forests. Villages under conflicts include Visiga vs Marui Ngwata with its neighbour centers of Kibuyuni, Yozole , Ng'ole from Mkuranga. Moreover village leaders lacking accountability of reading revenue and expenditure reports during village assembly meetings and some leaders have been questioned on their ability to document village minutes as they have not following up issues that were raised in previous meetings.

Pictures of illegal harvesting in Sofu and Mafumbi village in Kisarawe





(Photo by: MMC Field Visit, May 2013)

SAM findings were presented to the Council Management Team as well as the Council's committee for Planning, Economy and Environment and to communities in Sofu village so as to develop strategies to address these challenges. The Mama Mitsu Campaign has started addressing various challenges in Kisarawe. Some of its intervention include mobilizing and training local communities and their institutions to fight illegal logging. The district authorities have been engaged to discuss potential of approving village by-laws for community based forest management.

Community Action to address illegal harvesting in Sofu Village

SAM processes has awakened communities in Kisarawe district particularly of Sofu and Kola villages that communities have all the necessary resources and capacity to address issues of illegal harvesting.

It was noted that after the SAM team visited Sofu village and raised a concern on illegal logging a community meeting was called to develop collective action to reduce forests degradation. During the meeting it was noticed that some government staff are involved in those illegal actions and thereby Villager's selected a small committee to support the Village Natural Resource Committee (VNRC) to undertake patrol to evict forest criminals. The committee also reported to the district council seeking their support to address their boundary conflicts with nearby village called Malumbu so they can develop plans for sustainable harvesting. As a result the District authorities has agreed to organize a meeting involving village under conflict in order to resolve the matter. So far sustainable patrols have been established by villagers where seven forest criminals were caught and fined. The patrol confiscated 312 bags of charcoal which were sold and generated income to the village.