Establishing Forest Resources and Resource Users' Boundaries: Policy Briefs Based on Kenyan Case Studies

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Abstract: This policy briefs informs the decision makers on how to establish clear forest and community management units for access and management of forest resources for enhanced community livelihoods and improved forest management. It presents key findings on guidelines for forming partnerships and for establishment of forest resource and resource users' boundaries. The key to making informed decisions regarding forest governance requires understanding the resource use and users' boundaries that would increase forest resources and community livelihoods. The formulation of this policy briefs is based on the resource use and resource users' boundaries for implementing participatory forest management in Keraite; Nyamweru, Arabuko-Sokoke Forest, Kakamega, Loita, and upper Imenti which have been in place for over two decades, even though forest governance still remains a challenge. All the respondents for writing the policy briefs were purposefully sampled from each category of interviewees namely: leaders from different user groups, key informants from different government organizations and NGOs. To collect data semi-structured interviews were used to all the respondents. A total of 47 respondents purposefully selected were involved in the interviews. Drawing from these forests as case studies, this policy briefs proposes the embraced policies by communities in the establishment of forest resource use and users' boundaries. The study comes into conclusion that forest resources and resource users' boundaries are needed for effective community forest management through highlighting the policy briefs based on six key areas: gathering relevant information, tools that can facilitate formation of partnerships, engaging different stakeholders, facilitating local communities to organize, preparing for negotiations and how the households and the individuals negotiating establish agreements.

Keywords: Forest Resource Use, Resource User Boundary, Forest, Policy Brief, Kenya
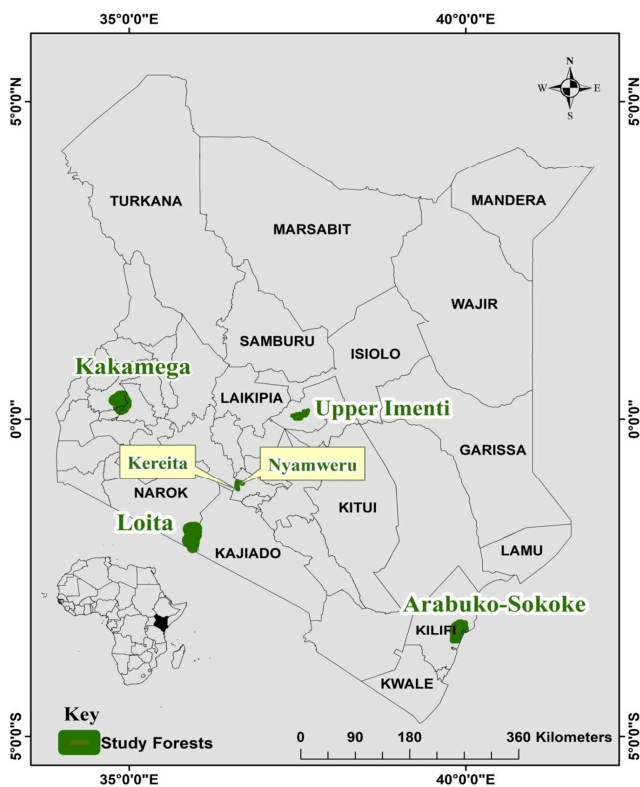
1. Introduction

The dominant forest management approach today is premised on co-management, or collaborative management of natural resources between local communities that often rely on those resources, and the government [4, 5]. This model pre-assumes that co-management with local communities can lead to more sustainable and equitable resource use. In Kenya, the co-management approach that is practiced is in the form of Participatory Forest Management. Policy makers and public administrators face a host of problems in managing Kenyan forests due to their physical characteristics, social, cultural, legal, use, interests and wellbeing boundaries [10, 6]. Institutional boundaries also play a key role in shaping how Kenyan forest users can coordinate their actions to resolve forest management issues [6, 7, 10]. Institutions are the laws, policies and organizational arrangements that communities devise to permit, forbid or require certain human behavior [1, 3, 8, 9]. Unregulated exploitation of forest resources has led to excessive use of the forest resource [2, 11], thus the need for policy recommendations. The six key areas that underpin the establishment of these forest resource and resource users'

boundaries policy include, gathering relevant information, the tools that can facilitate formation of partnerships, engaging different stakeholders, facilitation of local communities to organize, preparation for negotiations and how the households and the individuals negotiate to establish agreements. Thus these policy briefs are based on the resource use and resource users' boundaries for implementing participatory forest management in Keraite; Nyamweru, Arabuko-Sokoke, Kakamega, Loita and upper Imenti forests in Kenya which have been in place for over two decades [4].

2. Methodology

To develop the policy briefs data was collected from five forest sites involved in participatory forest management namely: Keraite; Nyamweru, Arabuko-Sokoke, Kakamega, Loita, and upper Imenti forests in Kenya (Figure 1).

Source Ming'ate M.L.F, [4]

Figure 1. Map showing Kenyan Case study forests.

Then the study utilized purposeful sampling to select 47 research participants namely: leaders from different user groups, key informants from different government organizations and NGOs. Semi-structured interviews were done to all the respondents to collect data (Table 1 below). This method offers participants the opportunity to explore issues they feel are significant in policy formulation. The interviewer does not keep a tight rein on the interview but instead allows the interviewee, through the use of open-ended questions, to explore the subject in as much depth from as many angles as they please. Also, semi-structured,

in-depth interviews are considered appropriate as they can prove particularly useful for investigating personal, sensitive, or confidential issues, which informants might find difficult to disclose and discuss in a group interview or focus group. Review of documents was also done to support the writing of policy briefs.

Table 1. Breakdown of the study respondents.

Type of participant	Breakdown of participants in the study	Number of participants
Leaders from different forest user groups	Arabuko-Sokoke	5
	Upper Imenti	5
	Kakamega	4
	Loita	9
	Nyamweru	5
	Kereita	5
Key informants from government organizations	Arabuko-Sokoke	3 (KEFRI, KWS, KFS)
	Upper Imenti	1 (KFS)
	Kakamega	1 (KFS)
	Loita	-
	Nyamweru	1KFS
	Keraite	1KFS & KENVO
Key informants from NGO	Arabuko-Sokoke	2
	Upper Imenti	1
	Kakamega	1
	Loita	1
	Nyamweru	1
	Keraite	1
Total number		47

All the qualitative data collected was analyzed through coding and grouping similar important ideas or phenomena from the study and then used for writing the policy brief.

3. Results and Discussion

The purpose of these policy briefs was to recommend policies for establishment of forest resource and resource users' boundaries under the participatory forest management arrangement regimes in Kenya. The forest resource use and users' boundaries are important for sustainable forest management. The findings are explained below:

3.1. Gathering Relevant Information

When gathering relevant information, for establishment of forest resource and resource users' boundaries under participatory forest management arrangement, one should get permission from the government authorities to organize stakeholders' meetings. Also the community and other stakeholders should be made aware of the relevant laws such as the Forest Conservation and Management Act, The Companies Act, Public Benefit Act and Labor related regulations. In addition, information should also be collected from the already existing forest user groups involved in a forest related activity. Finally, the community leaving adjacent to the forest and other stakeholders with working relationships are a good source of information for preparing for the resources and resource users' boundaries [5].

3.2. Tools That Can Facilitate Formation of Partnerships

The tools to be used, for establishment of forest resource and resource users' boundaries under participatory forest management arrangement include use of: Barazas (Chief's Village Committees), meetings e.g. (workshops, resource centers and benchmarking), religious, youth and women forums, media, text messages as a means of communication, memorandum of understanding with KFS, participatory forest mapping and the Nyumba Kumi initiates. Also, training of communities, establishing conflict management skills and sensitization of the community are key tools for establishment of forest resource and resource users' boundaries.

3.3. Engaging Different Stakeholders

When establishing forest resource and resource users' boundaries under participatory forest management arrangement, the stakeholders should engage through, the established memorandum of understanding and the participatory management arrangement agreements between stakeholders. Also the engagement must involve all the stakeholders' as a way of making them to recognize the boundaries, make their interests clear, showing their willingness to engage and knowing their roles. In addition, all important institutions in the forest management structure even though not recognized by law should be included in the process of establishing the forest resource and resource users' boundaries. Further, all the non-governmental organizations writing proposals for funding should include the communities in the process and should share the proceeds of the proposals with them and the CFA (Community Forest Association) representatives must have education that is above class eight for better engagement with the rest of the stakeholders. Finally there must be a transparent and equal engagement with all stakeholders by KFS (Kenya Forest Service).

3.4. Facilitating Local Communities to Organize

In the case of facilitating local communities to organize, the CFAs must be sensitized on the benefits they can derive from the forests and the rules and regulations for accessing forest resources. Also the community leaders' capacity should be built while being empowered to manage forest management agreements. Indigenous knowledge also should be used to help the local communities to organize. The CFAs (Community Forest Associations) must be made strong economically and their social capital strengthened. The government should recognize all the communities' effort in participatory forest management. Finally, CFAs membership should be purely meant for local communities.

3.5. Preparing for the Negotiations

When preparing for negotiations it is good to ensure that the stakeholders hold meetings successfully and appropriate procedures and rules are developed through an inclusive process. Also when preparing for meetings the executive members of the CFAs must meet with the CFA members first, discuss and approve the issues affecting them before meeting other stakeholders. In terms of logistics the CFAs should use both external and internal resources like membership contributions to facilitate them in their negotiation activities. In the case of equity no community member should be restricted in participating in any user group activities of his or her choice as per set requirements. Also when negotiating for rules, both KFS and the communities must be facilitated to access a lawyer and the rules used by user groups must be well written and communities clearly informed and involved. All the rules must be prepared and negotiated by all stakeholders, communities at the grass roots and the KFS [8]. Both the elites and the ordinary community members must participate when formulating rules. There is the need to define who should support what if the process is to succeed, to enhance team work among the stakeholders and separate roles during negotiation.

3.6. How the Households and the Individuals Negotiate for Agreements

Any one negotiating for the establishment of the forest resource use boundaries must be a member of a user group in the forest and trained on how to negotiate for agreements. Community members involved in negotiation for harvesting tree plantations should be aware that the forest management provisions allows them to harvest timber plantations if they form a company. Forests and memorandum of understanding should be used when negotiating for the establishment of agreements.

4. Conclusion

Based on the evidence of the Kenyan case studies it has become clear that forest resources and resource users' boundaries are needed for effective forest management. The indigenous communities are key in setting up forest resources and resource users' boundaries and should be empowered through training to enable them set-up forest resources and resource users' boundaries. Forest resource assessment should be done when setting up forest resource and resource users' boundaries. There is need for promoting forestry related management activities such as ecotourism in order to enhance community livelihoods. It is recommended that there is need to evaluate the process through which the boundaries for resource use and users' boundaries were set in order to enable resource management to be effectively and sustainably managed.

Conflict of Interest Statement

The authors declare that they have no competing interests.

Acknowledgements

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