

MASSAO, GLORY [S2-P6]

Combining Sustainable Community Forest Management and Forest Certification in Kilwa District

There is a pressing need for forest-adjacent rural communities across Tanzania to be able to sustainably manage and economically benefit from responsibly managing their natural forests. Accordingly, a national programme called Participatory Forest Management (PFM) vests communities with well defined rights to own, manage and benefit from forests by setting aside village forest reserves. PFM has resulted in some 4.1 million hectares of natural forest coming under the direct legal management of some 1,400 villages, making Tanzania one of Africa's leaders in community forest management. While PFM has resulted in improved forest conservation at local level, it has thus far resulted in only marginal or unclear economic gains for the communities conserving their forests. The Mpingo Conservation & Development Initiative (MCDI), a local NGO based in Kilwa District, south-eastern Tanzania, is addressing this challenge by facilitating certified, equitable and long-lasting forest-based income generating opportunities for communities, currently through sustainable timber production and improved forest fire management, which will eventually yield marketable carbon offsets under MCDI's REDD project. In just over 10 years, MCDI supported 20 communities to set aside more than 200,000 hectares of forest as village forest reserves. It facilitated the first commercial timber harvest from a village forest reserve in Tanzania in 2009. Since then, communities supported by MCDI have earned over \$200,000 from timber sales. MCDI certifies community forests with the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC), meeting the highest international standards of responsible forest management. MCDI manages the first – and still the only – FSC certificate for community-managed natural forests in all of Africa. I describe how MCDI has developed simple and locally appropriate approaches to allow community forest managers to quantify, market, sell and ultimately generate substantial financial benefits from their natural timber resources. MCDI's key achievements and challenges are discussed, along with how lessons learned can be applied to community forestry initiatives elsewhere.

Keywords: Participatory Forest Management, Village Land Forest Reserves, Forest Stewardship Council