

**EXAMINING THE ROLES OF COMMUNITY FOREST  
ASSOCIATIONS (CFAs) IN THE DECENTRALIZATION PROCESS  
OF KENYAN FORESTS**

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**Abstract**

The introduction of Participatory Forestry Management (PFM) in Kenya from 1997 has led to formation of community based organizations which have come to be referred to as Community Forest Associations (CFAs). Most of the CFAs are preparing to enter into forest management agreements with the Kenya Forest Service (KFS). This will confer management roles to the community with KFS retaining the forest resource ownership right and the right to withdraw the agreement in total or parts of it. In forests where PFM is active, the CFAs are forming confederates which are being referred to as CFAs.

Results from data collected in 12 Kenyan forests over a period of about 10 years indicate that a majority of the associations are moving towards forming confederates of several user groups. Some of the Associations are involved in diverse activities ranging from forest protection, monitoring and management to water extraction and distribution etc.

The roles of the CFAs have been changing over time from being directly controlled by the KFS to a more decentralized system where they are more involved in decision making. They have further expanded their roles from lobbying to conflict management, fundraising, negotiating with KFS, initiating rural development and forestry development activities. These new trends have also led to the formation of splinter groups due to power and leadership wrangles.

Although their roles as associations are beginning to be recognized by the government, there are still challenges especially since the decentralization process has not been fully implemented. The situation is further aggravated by the fact that the officers of the Kenya Forest Service feel that some of their roles are being taken over by the CFAs. This has weakened their position and denied them the right to participate in some activities. Some donors have also openly preferred working with the CFAs while totally ignoring the presence of the forest officers; a development the forest officers view as threat. A strategy therefore needs to be developed to ensure collaboration between all the stakeholders.

## 1. Introduction

It is widely believed that decentralizing the management of natural resources can increase both efficiency and equity. The implication here is that the efficiency and equity benefits of decentralization are derived from democratic processes that encourage local institutions and local authorities to serve and deliver relevant services to the local people. Whereas efficiency increases because there is more local input resulting in better targeted policies and lower transaction costs and therefore more beneficial to central governments, the equity and democracy benefits are more likely to accrue to the local communities. Decentralization in many parts of the world has taken many forms ranging from de-concentration to devolution of power and the implication of community participation is often implied in many references such as participatory forest management (PFM), joint forest management (JFM), community forest management (CFM) and Community Based Forest Management (CBFM).

In many parts of Africa, PFM is still new and its progress is uneven across the region (Yemshaw, 2007). PFM is often used as a general term to indicate local participation and it involves a multi-stakeholders approach where the private sector, institutions and communities are involved in management of forests and sharing of benefits that accrue from such management processes. It involves forging a partnership between the local community and the central local governments for sustainable management of forests (Ngece et al, 2007). The inclusion of communities in forest management is, in essence, an approach towards achieving forest sustainability and biodiversity conservation with socio-economic objectives. These socio-economic objectives include equity, conflict resolution, awareness, forest production, poverty reduction and sustainable utilization. The positive results of implementing PFM process is demonstrated through a change of attitude to the forest resource by the local forest adjacent communities and hence, a change in the level of forest conservation. But such results are highly influenced by the mode of participation adopted by the PFM implementation process.

In Kenya, PFM is a relatively new concept that has been a result of the government's recognition of the critical role to be played by forest adjacent communities in ensuring that tree cover in the country increases from the current 2% to the recommended 10% (MENR, 2007). This stemmed from the pressing need not only to increase forest cover but to also reduce forest destruction and degradation (DRSRS and KFWG, 2006) and the A new forest policy and Act has therefore been passed that applies PFM principles to all public, private and local authority forests and this has been a tremendous achievement for the local communities (Ongugo et al, 2007).

Arising from this new policy and law, new institutions are emerging to implement the process of involving local communities in management of the forest resources. These institutions are being established with the aim of co-managing the forest resources with the central and local government institutions such as the Kenya Forest Service (KFS) and the County Councils (CCs). To enter into such co-management arrangements, the local communities are legally expected to form and register Community Forest Associations (CFAs) within different forests distributed across the country (MENR, 2007). The associations are registered only if their objectives; composition of their management committees; election procedures; and, purpose for which their funds may be used are considered satisfactory. But despite all these requirements, the new CFAs have had their shares of challenges; there have been cases of mismanagement and disintegration, heterogeneity within members of the associations causing more conflicts and varying interests and objectives for forming the Associations.

Further development of PFM process has however been slowed down as a result of the following emerging issues which require immediate solutions for the process to continue smoothly:

- Will communities have the right to license the extraction and movement of forest products in forest being managed under PFM?
- Who will arrest and prosecute offenders in forest under PFM?
- Who will bear the costs and enjoy the benefits accruing from forest management under PFM?
- Who will meet the cost of the national and global citizens and other stakeholders in forests managed under PFM?
- Are community associations capable of managing an entire forest area or block since the law requires that one CFA should be formed in every forest?
- Will there be one national PFM management regime for all forests types in the country?
- Will PFM be allowed in all forests irrespective the tenure under which they are being governed; private, public and communal?

Currently, there are about 100 CFAs that are distributed across various parts of the country. Most of these are not quite operational since there are some basic concerns that need to be addressed by Kenya Forestry Service (KFS) before the chief roles of these associations can be understood. For example, the development of the forest management guidelines have not been released to all actors and many forest adjacent communities have yet to understand the implication of the new policy. The development of local management by laws and the signing of forest management agreements with KFS are yet to be implemented. Many organizations-both government and non governmental continue to make efforts to educate communities living adjacent to major forests

on the requirements of the new policy and new Act. They have attempted relate these government documents to their involvement in the management of forest resources.

The objective of this paper is to examine the roles of Community Forest Associations in the decentralization process of Kenyan Forests. The following sections will discuss the methods used for data collection and analysis, some background literature on PFM in Kenya and the pilot Associations in Kenya.

## **2. Methodology**

The study was conducted using a combination of both IFRI and SANREM research instruments. The IFRI program relates forest users and institutions through formal and informal interviews to collect information on numerous entities that influence forest use. Pre-tested IFRI forms were used to collect data on the site, the settlement, the user group and the Associations/ organizations found in different forests across the country. Participatory Rural Appraisal methods (PRA) such as focused group discussions and interviews with key informants (group leaders, members, other forest stakeholders) were also used to gather more information on the associations. A community meeting was organized by the IFRI team to facilitate interactions with the community members, foresters, and other key informants in the area and to get their perspectives on PFM.

A pre tested SANREM questionnaire was also used to collect data on households. A section of the questionnaire provided information on reasons for joining groups among others. Data from 150 households randomly selected in the villages adjacent to the forest in Kakamega was used.

IFRI data was collected from 16 groups/ associations in 11 IFRI forests in Kenya over a period of 10 years since 1997 to 2007. The forests are located in various regions across the country. These include Upper imenti and Gathiuru in Mt. Kenya, Kimothon in Mt. Elgon, Aberdare Ranges, Arabuko Sokoke and Vanga in the Coast, West Mau and Tugen Hills in the Rift Valley, Ramogi and Thimlich Ohinga in the Lake Region, and Kakamega rain forest on the Western side of Kenya (Table 1).

Data was then entered on the ACCESS programme and analyzed using EXCEL and SPSS packages. Descriptive statistics were applied to describe various groups/associations in Kenyan Forests and examine their capacity and roles in the decentralization process in Kenya

## **2.1 Definition of terms**

Primary forest association: one or more user groups with rules, policies, and/or guidelines about the forest, some of which users have prescribed for themselves.

Secondary forest association: two or more forest associations that work together to accomplish joint activities and/or objectives with rules, policies and/or guidelines some of which have been prescribed by the secondary forest association.

Tertiary forest association (or parent organization): two or more secondary forest associations that work together to accomplish some joint activities and/or objectives with rules, policies, and/or guidelines, some of which have been prescribed by the tertiary association

## **3. The New Forest Act and Forest Associations**

The New Forests Act 2005 has a clear framework and incentives for community and private sector involvement in the forestry sector. It gives power to the Kenya Forest Service (KFS) an Administrative body that was created to replace the Forest Department (FD). This is a semi autonomous body that will be free of political influence from the government thus decision making will be objective.

There is also a Board responsible for the management of the Kenya Forests Service. It consists of Permanent Secretaries from the Ministries of Environment and Natural Resources, Water, Finance, Local Authorities; Directors of KEFRI, KWS, NEMA and KFS; and 8 persons not being public servants appointed by the Minister of Environment. Among these are two members of the community.

There are also Forest Conservation Committees in conservancies established by the Board all over Kenya. The Forest Service will devolve powers to Forest Conservation Committees, the Private Sector and Community Forest Associations. The Forest Conservation Committees will be responsible for informing the Board on issues and ideas raised by people in their conservancy and monitoring and implementation of the Act and other forest regulations.

The new law promotes commercial tree growing by the private sector, farmers and communities through incentives, and will ensure market prices for forest produce. This will ensure the much needed provision of wood and other timber products. Whereas the Forests Act (Cap 385) did not recognize the participation of all stakeholders in management of forest plantations on state land, the new law allows the participation of other stakeholders in growing the much-needed plantations.

Low penalties often allowed those who destroy forests through charcoal burning, illegal logging, setting fires, and cultivating in indigenous forests to walk away with almost no punishment. The new law has higher penalties to deter people from carrying out these activities.

### **3.1 Principles and objectives of the new forest policy**

The goal of the Forest Policy of 2005 is to “enhance the contribution of the forest sector in the provision of economic, social and environmental goods and services.” The following principles underline the policy:

- Integrated management
- Traditional and cultural values
- Stewardship
- Community participation
- User pays principle
- Intra and intergenerational equity
- Market value of forest products
- International cooperation

Three specific objectives of the new forest policy that touch on activities of the forest associations include:

1. Contribution to poverty reduction, employment creation and improvement of livelihoods through sustainable use, conservation and management of forests and trees
2. To contribute to sustainable land use through soil, water and biodiversity conservation and tree planting through sustainable management of forests and trees
3. To promote the participation of the private sector, communities and other stakeholders in forest management to conserve water catchment areas, create employment, reduce poverty and ensure the sustainability of forest management

All the above will be done through empowering local communities to manage forests through community forest associations

The key elements of the new forest policy that include the involvement of forest associations include:

- Involvement of adjacent forest communities and other stakeholders in forest conservation and management
- Provision of appropriate incentives to promote sustainable use and management of forest resources

### **3.2 PFM under the new Forest Act**

After the enactment of the Forests Act 2005, experience from the areas where PFM has been piloted indicates that community involvement is well addressed by the new law. But the challenge is that community, Government and other stakeholders' expectations are not in tandem with the Act. Communities in various Participatory Forest Management pilot sites in Kenya have shown that they are capable of carrying out effective forest production and forest protection measures even without the involvement of the Kenya Forest Service (KFS).

The act supports the involvement of stakeholders in the forest sector in joint management of forest resources with the Kenya Forest Service. Local Associations therefore play a big role in the set up.

The community and private stakeholders will benefit immensely from the New Act if implemented as per the theory. The Act has recognized the role of forests in the livelihoods of the rural communities and proposes a number of measures to enhance community participation in forest conservation. These measures include:

1. Encouraging sustainable use of forest resources
2. Supporting the establishment of community forests associations through which communities can be able to participate in the conservation and management of forests
3. Protecting the traditional interests of local communities customarily resident within and around forests
4. Recognizing cultural practices that are compatible with sustainable forest management

But PFM processes in some pilot sites have raised certain challenges especially regarding community forest associations. For example, do the CFA 'a have the right to license the extraction and movement of forest products in forests being managed under PFM? Are CFA's really capable of managing an entire forest area or block since the ACT advocates for one CFA per forest?

### **3.3 Community Forest Associations (CFAs) in Kenya**

The new forest act has clear provisions for the recognition and role of community forest associations in forest management. Members of a forest community and local residents who form such associations may apply to the Kenya Forests Service (KFS) for certain privileges in relation to management of particular forest areas and forest produce rights.



The act enables members of a forest community to enter into partnerships with the KFS through registered Community Forest Associations (CFA). These partnerships would be applicable for both state forests and/or local authority forests. It is therefore possible for local communities to directly participate in protection, conservation, and management of a given forest area subject to provisions of a management plan for the forest (World Bank Report, 2007). The new act has granted the Associations some user rights to the forest resource on condition that these rights do not come into conflict with the conservation of the forest.

Some of the user rights granted these associations include collection of medicinal herbs, harvesting of honey, harvesting of timber or fuel wood, grass harvesting and grazing, collection of forest produce for community-based industries, ecotourism and recreational activities, scientific and educational activities, plantation establishment through nonresident cultivation, contracts to assist in carrying out specified silvicultural operations, development of community wood and non wood forest-based industries, and any other benefits that may from time to time be agreed upon between an association and the KFS.

Many communities have in the last year or so attempted to form associations as expected by the Act while others are in the process of forming them. Although a majority of these groups are still in the primary stages of formation, their anticipation in getting involved in PFM remains high and their objectives are clear. Most remain unorganized while others are not genuinely formed for conservation purposes and still others are driven by self-interest. It will also be challenging to implement participatory forest management (PFM) in view of the lack of clear mechanisms for benefit sharing and the slow rate to embrace PFM among foresters.

### **3.4 Achievements and Changing roles**

The roles of the CFAs have been changing over time from being directly controlled by the Forest Department to a more decentralized system where they are more involved in decision making. They have further expanded their roles from lobbying to conflict management, fundraising, negotiating with KFS during most of the meetings, initiating rural development and forestry development activities and more importantly developing systems which are introducing equity principles and addressing the needs of the poor and disadvantaged members of the community. These new trends have also led to the formation of splinter groups due to power and leadership wrangles.

The Associations have also pioneered projects like butterfly farming, beekeeping, farm forestry initiatives, environmental awareness programmes and eco-tourism

facilities which have improved the livelihood of the grass root communities. The initiatives have added value to PFM in a hitherto situation where communities would hardly have got any benefit from the forest.

#### **4. Community Forest Associations (CFAs) in Selected Forests**

According to the last annual general meeting of the National Alliance of the Community Forest Associations (NACOFA), which is the umbrella body of all the community forest associations in Kenya, most of the associations had been formed as a result of campaigns by the Kenya forest Action Network (FAN) and the Kenya Forests Working Group (KFWG); both of which are national non governmental organizations involved in forestry governance in the country. Recently however, the government through the newly created Kenya Forest Service (KFS) has also been spearheading the establishment of community forest associations as a way of fulfilling the requirement of the new Forest Act 2005 whose implementation falls within the mandate of KFS. A few of these associations are discussed below.

##### **4.1 Meru Forest Environmental Conservation and Protection (MEFECAP)**

Communities in Eastern side of Mt. Kenya, Upper Imenti have been involved in participatory forest management for quite some time. They have since formed associations and user groups aimed at the use, management, rehabilitation, protection, conservation and maintenance of the forest. Each forest beat has at least one forest protection group and several user groups. By the time the study was being done in 2004, there were about 7,800 members on the Eastern side of Mt. Kenya involved in the management of the forest.

Members of the various groups in Meru Central decided to join together to form one big umbrella body, a Community Based Organization (CBO), Meru Forest Environmental Conservation and Protection (MEFECAP). The CBO consists of 11 smaller groups, and a total of 300 active members involved in the activities of the CBO. The CBO has since been registered under the Societies' Act by the Attorney General in anticipation of involvement in the New Act. It is currently working with the KFS in PFM activities.

The membership of the Association is restricted to members of existing groups whose activities are related to forestry. Individuals are therefore expected to register with groups. Some of the groups that make up the association include protection group, fuel wood collectors, grazing groups, electric fence groups and self-help group with nurseries etc.

The CFA's steering committee has representatives from Kenya Forests Service (KFS), KWS, Agriculture and Provincial Administration and Meru Municipal Council. The steering committee would spear head implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the organization in an advisory capacity.

## **Structure**

The affairs of the CFA are managed by a committee consisting of 9 members, 5 of who are official office bearers (chairman, vice chairman, secretary, vice secretary and treasurer) who will also be bank signatories. The heads or agents of departments and relevant institutions may be incorporated as ex-officio in committee meetings.

## **Objectives**

1. To protect the forest through patrolling and forwarding any information to the Kenya Forest Service that would assist in reducing destruction.
2. To conserve the forest through;
  - Afforestation programmes in all degraded areas
  - Establishing plantations and
  - Protection of catchment areas.
3. Improve the status of the forest through carrying out silvicultural practices like pruning and road maintenance.
4. Uplift the standards of living by starting income generating projects such as ecotourism, bee keeping, grazing in the forest and fuelwood.
5. Educate members on importance of forestry.

The Association has by-laws which include timelines for meetings, carrying out elections, and the other rules that have to be followed by the members. The group also has guidelines for all activities that have to be carried out in the forest. These include grazing, firewood collection, planting seeds and seedlings and forest monitoring.

The Association also works with Forest Protection, Environmental conservation and Ecotourism vested interest group. The VIG or Vested Interest Group is made up of landowners whose plots are within 5 kilometres of the forest. The interested groups are composed of 73 concerned community members who work on a voluntary basis. The project started in 2001 after consultation with KWS, FD and the local community.

Their objectives include conservation, addressing human/wildlife conflict, agro-forestry activities, protection of water catchment areas and improving community livelihoods.

#### **4.2 Arabuko-Sokoke Forest Adjacent Dwellers Association (ASFADA)**

Arabuko-Sokoke Forest Adjacent Dwellers Association (ASFADA) is adjacent to Arabuko Sokoke Forest in the coast. It started as a lobbying group in 1997/8 when politicians wanted to de gazette part of the forest for re settlement. A few local organizations and individuals lobbied for signatures around the Forest and presented a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to the Minister who stopped the degazettement. ASFADA then transformed into a lobbying, forest management and rural development community organization for communities adjacent to the forest. ASFADA brings together 52 villages around the Arabuko Sokoke Forest with a population of over 104,000 people. The forest has been zoned into six regions and each zone is represented by 10 delegates who elect the executive committee.

In 1999, ASFADA registered under the Social Services Act in Kilifi and Malindi Districts. ASFADA has over 300 different user groups, making up about 2000 members.

##### **Structure**

ASFADA reorganized its structure to be in line with requirements of the Act. The organization is made up of different local groups (so ASFADA is in effect a second level CBO) and has been registered under the Societies Act by the Ministry of Culture and Social Services.

The association hopes to get each of the newly registered user groups (8 so far) to raise funds through membership fees and other activities to pay their officials. Current Executive committee are all volunteers, mostly retirees with pensions, which allow them to do this work without having to worry about earning a living, and which also has given them experience in dealing with authorities (Chairman is ex-Kenya Ports Authority, and Secretary used to work for the Department of Education). While they all have a strong conservation interest, they can see that young people will need different incentives to participate.

ASFADA has been working harmoniously with the local administration. They also have joint programmes with KEFRI, KWS, NMK which include:

- Biodiversity Conservation Project
- Fence project supported by KFS, KEFRI, NMK, KWS, EU and CDF
- USAID project

### **4.3 Kakamega Community Forest Association (KACOFA)**

The association; based in Kakamega Rain Forest is an umbrella association whose development was sparked by the enactment of the New Forests Act 2005 which requires that there be an association in each forest governing the forest.

The Kenya Forest Service (KFS) carried out a workshop in Naivasha to educate stakeholders on the new Act in November 2005. After the workshop, they held meetings with all the groups in the area and decided to form an umbrella organization which they named KACOFA. In July 2006, KACOFA was registered with 25 groups; they have since increased to 31. These groups included only those around the forest which are involved in conservation activities.

#### **Activities**

The association is mainly involved in management and conservation of Kakamega Forest which includes tree nursery establishment and afforestation. They however hope to conduct their activities according to the Kakamega Forests Management Plan which is yet to be finished.

The association is also involved in the following activities:

- Sensitizing communities on conservation
- Monitoring the forest condition
- Monitoring activities carried out by member groups
- Re- afforestation (They planted 10 000 seedlings in May 2006)
- Training groups in nursery management
- Assist in forest policing.

#### **Structure**

The Association has 8 executives, 2 women and 6 men. The elections were done through delegates who represented all the groups around Kakamega Forest. The association is registered under the Societies Act of Kenya, with 31 smaller groups and local level NGOs under it.

Its vision is to have a forest ecosystem that sustains the forest resource and social needs of the Kakamega community. The mission is to restore and sustainably manage the ecosystem of Kakamega through full involvement of the community.

## **5. Presentation of Results and Findings**

### **5.1 Formation of groups/associations**

Results showed that most (22.2%) of the forest groups/ associations were formed in 1999 followed by 16.7% in 2000/2002 (Table 1). These were formed during this time in anticipation of the New Forest Act which specified the need for communities to join registered groups for them to be included in forest management and harvesting.

On formation of the associations/forest groups, 55.6% had attained the legal status as compared to 44% which had not. However the latter later obtained the legal status implying that all forest groups across the sites (Table 1) were legally constituted as local groups registered by the Ministry of Culture and Social services. Some further developed and were registered under the Societies' Act under the Attorney General.

Results indicated that majority of the associations, 82% were formed either by individual initiative or by a user group indicating that these associations are self driven and that members of the communities realize the need to form associations with the aim of sustainable management of the forest. A few, 12% were formed by governmental program to address a specific problem in the area, while another 6% were formed by a local Non Governmental Program.

Table 1: Existing forest associations/groups

	Forest Name	Forest group/association	Year formed	Type of association*	Initiator of association
1	Gathiuru (Mt. Kenya)	Burguret river water user association	1999	Secondary	Individual
2	West Mau, Kedowa	Country vision	1999	Primary	Individual
3	Aberdares Ranges	Geta Region Environmental Conservation Group	2002	Primary	user group
4	Thimlich Ohinga	Got Olasi Youth Tree-farming Nursery project	1994	Primary	user group
5	Ramogi Sacred Grove	Got Ramogi Alternative Health	1999	Primary	Local NGO
		Ramogi Eco cultural and Education Centre	2002	Primary	Governmental Program
6	Kakamega Rain Forest	Isukha Heritage	1995	Primary	Individual
		Kakamega Community Forest Association (KACOFA)	2005	Tertiary	user group
		Kakamega Environmental Education Programme (KEEP)	1995	Secondary	Individual
7	Kimothon (Mt. Elgon)	Kimothon Non-residential Cultivators	2000	Primary	Governmental Program
8	Upper Imenti (Mt. Kenya)	MEFECAP	1998	Secondary	user group
		Michaka/ Kiringo Forest Conservation Project	2000	Primary	user group
		Ribui Kirachene Forest Operation Protection Group	1998	Primary	user group
9	Tugen Hills Forest	Sochkei Self Help Group	2002	Primary	user group
10	Vanga Mangrove Forest	Vanga community user group	2000	Primary	Individual
11	Arabuko Sokoke	Arabuko-Sokoke Forest Adjacent Dwellers Association (ASFADA)	1999	Tertiary	User group

\* Refer to definition of terms on page 5

The Forest Act 2005 clearly states that the community stands to gain various benefits and in return the community forest associations (CFA) shoulder some costs which include forest protection, conservation and management according to the provisions of the management agreement and an approved management plan (KFS 2006).

Results from households in Kakamega indicated that members of the community joined groups for various reasons (Table 2). 62.5% of the respondents however joined the groups in order to either access more forest products and other benefits or for better management of the forest. This clearly shows that although they were dependent on the forest for its many benefits, they were also concerned about its sustainability.

**Table 2: Reasons for joining groups**

Reasons for joining the group	% frequency	Frequency	Rank
Access to other benefits	24.3	35	1
Better forest management and more benefits	21.5	31	2
Forest protection for the community and the future	18.1	26	3
Increased forest products	16.7	24	4
Social aspects	13.9	20	5
To be respected regarded responsible in the village	0.7	1	7
Forced by government	0.7	1	8
Others	4.2	6	6

## 5.2 Nature of Rules in associations

Majority of the members in all the forest associations understand rules of the association. 50% said that almost everyone understood rules, while 33% said that everyone understood rules. Only 17% said that half the people understand rules. Results also showed that from the researcher's estimation of the associations' rules, 72% of the associations' rules were easily understood by members. Rules in 22% of the associations were relatively complex but could be understood through learning and experience with only 6% having very complex and difficult to understand rules.

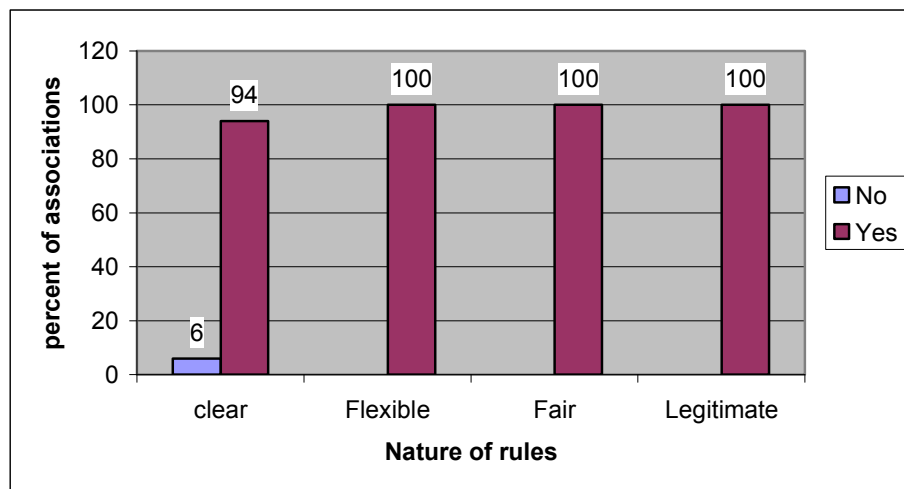
Table 3: Complexity of association rules

Complexity of rules	% frequency
No, very complex, difficult to understand	6
Relatively complex, but can be understood through learning and experience	22
Yes, easily understood	72



It is clear from the results that most of the association rules are easily understood to the members (Table 3). Members also gave their views about the nature of association rules (figure 1); almost all the members of the association perceived the association rules as clear (94%), flexible (100%), fair (100%) and legitimate (100%). Since almost all the members perceive the association rules as fair, flexible and legitimate, the likelihood of conformance is high.

Figure 1: Nature of association rules



### 5.3 Analysis of activities carried by forest groups/associations

Data from other studies (Ongugo et al., 2008) showed that there was high dependence of forest adjacent communities on forest products (fodder, firewood, poles and posts, medicinal plants, charcoal etc). This implies that there is need for communities to come up with measures of reducing their dependence on the forest in which the formation of CFAs would play a critical role.

Data collected from the same sites on forest associations/groups showed that majority of these coordinated activities aimed at forest conservation and sustainable use (Table 4).

Table 4: Activities carried out by associations in the past year

Activity category	Activity Done by association	% of activity coordinated, rules passed, modified and none			
		Activity coordinated	Passed rules	Modified rules	No activity done
<b>Rehabilitation/enrichment</b>	Plant seeds/seedlings	72			28
	Other maintenance	39	11	6	44
<b>Harvesting</b>	Harvest forest products	44	17		39
	Distribute forest products	17	6		78
	Sell forest products	22	6		72
	Distribute revenue from sale of forest products	17			83
	Determine timing of harvest of forest products	6	6		89
	Determine quantity of forest products harvested	11	6		83
	Determine type of technology used to harvest forest products	18	12		71
	Determine who is authorized to harvest forest products	24	12		65
	Determine type of use that can be made of forest products	24	12		35
	Sell rights to harvest forest products that users can trade with others	2	6		82
	Rent non transferable rights to harvest forest products	12			88
<b>Monitoring</b>	Monitor forest condition	82			18
	Monitor conformance of rules	65			35
	Sanction rule breakers	47	6		47
<b>Conflict resolution</b>	Arbitrate disputes among local users	56	6		38
<b>Networking</b>	Interact with higher authorities	69	13		19

On rehabilitation/enrichment, 72% coordinated planting of seeds and seedlings while 39% coordinated other maintenance of the forest such as pruning, forest floor clearing etc. Most of them also coordinated and passed rules on harvesting of forest products (Table 4). 56% coordinated issues of conflict resolution with 6% passing rules on conflict resolution. This indicates that the associations have experience in handling conflicts within them and that this experience could be used while handling conservation issues as CFAs.

A considerable percentage of the groups/associations, 69% have experience in networking through interaction with higher authorities. This could play as a foundation towards joint collaboration in forest management. Few associations passed rules/modify rules due to the fact that they are not legally mandated to make decisions on issues regarding the forest, however, the fact that some passed rules within their associations on forest conservation and use implies that communities have the ability and experience to contribute towards decision making in forests in the decentralized system.

#### 5.4 Leadership in the associations

Majority of the groups 94% hold elections regularly while a small percent, 6% hold meetings irregularly. Studies also indicated that officials of most of these associations meet regularly on group functions. 11% met once a week, 50%, once or twice a month, 28% once every 3 months and 11% meeting once a year.

All the associations have had a female member among the officials at one point in time. 17% had a female leader but only currently, 39% in the previous 5 years and 44% currently and in the past 5 years. This shows that women have been well represented in these associations.

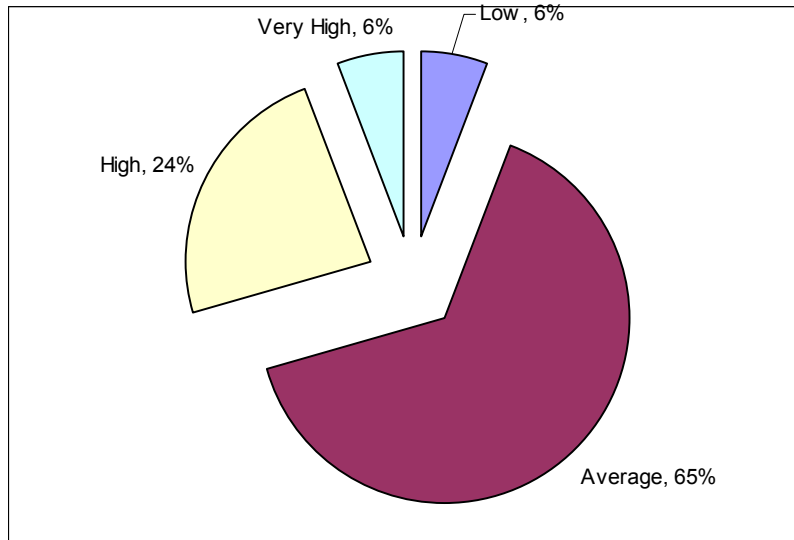
Table 5: Office tenure of association officials

	Fixed period elected	Variable, subject to vote
President	94	6
V. President	94	6
Secretary	93	7
Treasurer	93	7

All the associations select their officials through elections with majority of them, 94% electing their officials within a fixed period. 6% of the groups had variable

elections subject to vote (Table 5). This again shows that leaders of the associations are elected democratically.

Figure 2: Education level of association officials



On education level of the organization, results indicated that majority of officials (65%) in these organizations had an average educational level. 24% had high level of education. Very few had very high or very low level of education which accounted for 6% in each.

Figure 3: Whether a forest user has held a position among officials in associations

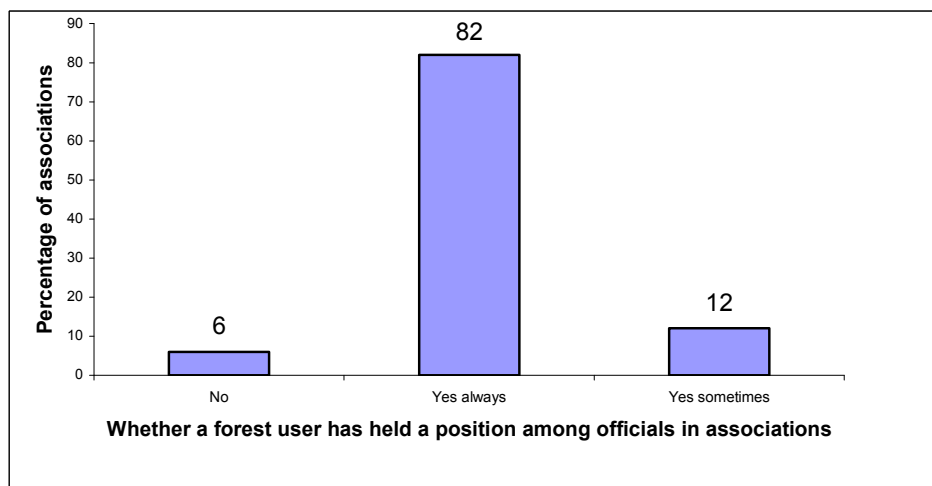


Figure 3 indicates that positions among officials were mainly held by forest users. 82% of the association always had a forest user among the officials, while 12% of them had a forest user sometimes. Only 6% of them did not have a forest user among their officials. These results indicate that the associations identify with issues affecting the forest adjacent communities since they are also users. They are thus better placed to make decisions as regards to the forest.

### Conflicts and resolution

Associations face several challenges with leadership being one of them. Results showed that in 76% of the associations, users could remove the officials while 24% could not remove their officials. Further results indicated that in 41% of the associations, officials could not be removed by an external or higher authority, with 59% being removed but only with complaints and substantiated evidence from harvesters. This poses as one of the problems in associations which cannot be able to remove their non performing leaders.

Majority of the associations experienced conflict within their organizations, 71% with only 29% claiming that there was no conflict within their organizations. However, all of them had mechanisms for resolving conflicts (Table 6).

Table 6: Conflicts and conflict resolution in associations

	Percent of associations experiencing conflicts and conflict resolution	
	no	yes
Existence of internal conflicts?	29	71
Presence of mechanisms for resolving conflicts?		100

Further results indicated that most of the organizations, 65% resolved their conflicts through face to face meetings and 24% through internal committees set to handle such issues. Only 12% resolved their conflicts through arbitration by external bodies. This clearly indicates the maturity and experience of the organizations in managing their own affairs.

### 5.6 Finances and sourcing

Results indicated that majority of the groups/ associations in Kenya get their funding mainly from membership contribution, 56% and voluntary contribution, 39% (Table 7). Some groups/ associations got their funds from other sources, 6% such as selling of seeds and seedlings among others. Their single most important source of finances for the past year was membership fees, 47% followed by voluntary contribution of funds and funds from development agencies both of which accounted for 18%. Voluntary contribution of funds and

membership fees also scored highly as the most important source of finances for the associations even in the past 5 years. This infers that these associations/groups depend highly on the goodwill of its members and that the members were committed to supporting their associations.

Table 7: Finances

Source of funds	% of the associations' major sources of income					
	voluntary contribution of funds	membership fees	development agency	sales of forest products	Aid from external agencies	other
Source of funds	39	56				6
Single most important source	18	47	18	12		6
Single most important source past 5 years	17	58		8	8	8

Further results indicated that 64% of the groups/ association could rely on contributions from members or its user group or other funds raised locally even without any funds from external agencies. 21% could not meet their expenses while 14% could support themselves by sales from forest products.

However 43% of the groups spent their income on office keeping activities such as buying stationery while 7% spent it on salaries of hired personnel. 28% of the associations spent most of their income on maintaining and improving their forest resources respectively.

Results in table 7 above indicate that these associations are not well funded especially by the government and Non governmental organizations. This could be attributed to the fact that they do not have the capacity to source for funds or that they are not well networked to be able to reach potential donors.

### 5.7 Record keeping

All associations showed high capability of keeping and maintaining records of various items (Table 8). However none of them submitted records to either parent organization or the government.

Table 8: Record keeping in associations

Type of records	% of associations which maintain records
Identity of office bearers	100
meetings and resolutions in meetings	100
Income and expenditure	100
Contributions made by members	94
Monitoring forest condition	87
Amount of forest products harvested	58
Distribution of forest products among users	58
Whether rule breakers are punished	94
Conflicts	83
Conflict resolution	94
Different ways individuals break rules	94
Type of punishments imposed	100

## 5.8 Networking

As indicated in table 4 above, 69% of the associations coordinated interaction with higher authorities. This indicated that these organizations have links with other stakeholders and also networking abilities. Further results showed that all the associations perceived themselves as cooperating in terms of relating to other forest governing structures. 44% perceived themselves as cooperating, but independent of other organizations rules and regulations while 56% perceived themselves as cooperating jointly in determining rules and regulations.

## 6. Discussion of results

### Roles of groups/association in decentralization of forests

After the enactment of the Forests Act 2005, experience from several associations indicates that community involvement is well addressed by the new law. However, the challenge is that community, Government and other stakeholders' expectations do not seem to converge. Communities have shown that they are capable of evolving effective forest production and protection

systems ostensibly independent of the involvement of the Kenya Forest Service (KFS).

The fact that there are several groups/associations within one forest indicates that communities are eager to participate in the decentralization process. However most of these are not structured according to the new Act's stipulations. A few, some of which were mentioned in earlier chapters have moved into attaining this structure but they still face the problems of leadership wrangles, finances, low levels of education among others.

Although some of these associations have transformed into CFAs, they are still not clear on what benefits they will get from the forest and how this will be enacted. Most are caught up in leadership and power wrangles while others are still unsure on how the management plans are to be developed. Below is a summary of some of the challenges facing associations:

Table 9: Summary of Challenges facing CFAs

<b>Challenges</b>	<b>Characteristics</b>
Organization complexity	<p>Lack of defined structure and hierarchy at local, regional, and national levels, exclusion and inclusion definitions</p> <p>Diversity of origins, cultures, languages and aspirations bringing mistrust and suspicion among members</p> <p>Complexity of implementation in plantation forests</p> <p>Fair responsibility and benefit sharing challenges</p> <p>External interference</p>
Conflict of interests	<p>Communal rights versus individual interests</p> <p>Ideal social situation versus prevailing conditions</p> <p>conservation versus exploitation</p> <p>Existing capacity versus necessary capacity</p> <p>Policy makers and professional perception versus community understanding of the groups objectives</p> <p>Prevailing attitude versus required attitude</p>



	Plantation forests – Community objectives versus industry’ objectives
Group historical problems	<p>Over reliance on external help (from NGOs)</p> <p>Inadequate funding</p> <p>Misappropriation of funds</p> <p>Politician and private businesses interference</p> <p>Mediocrity and difficulties in maintaining members enthusiasm, commitment and efforts for long term</p>
Emergent problems	<p>An overwhelming interest in groups by large population</p> <p>Unpredictable evolution of the groups over time</p> <p>Overdependence on the forest resources by even larger numbers of people than before</p>
Capacity	Inability to follow a sustainable utilization patterns

## 7. Conclusions and Recommendations

Results indicate that CFAs have a major role to play in the decentralization process of forests in Kenya. Some of these have been further discussed.

**Capacity building role:** Most CFAs have people who have worked in the forestry and agricultural sectors as members. These members have knowledge of tree planting and management hence they guide other members of the CFAs in carrying out forestry related activities. There is a vast potential in the indigenous knowledge of members of CFAs since they have lived in the forests for a long period of time. Members of the CFAs often know the tree species in the forests, their uses, abundance and diversity. Such knowledge is also important in education, research and even in ecotourism. This knowledge needs to be tapped as a way of enhancing the sustainability of the forest resources.

**Benefits sharing role:** Community involvement in forest management and environmental conservation has often been encouraged. This is based on the principle that forests provides intangible and not often direct or tangible benefits to those communities who participate in their management. This idea often does not encourage the involvement of local communities in the management of

forests and other natural resources. Tangible benefits to the CFAs from the forests contribute to the cohesiveness of the CFA members. The benefits ensure the sustainability of the groups and therefore the principle of benefit sharing needs to be strengthened and stressed in all the CFAs in the country. Further, it was evident that most CFAs had been formed with the hope that the government would in future allow them to reap real benefits such as non residential cultivation within the forests and harvesting of forest products.

**Management role:** The Forest Act provides for CFAs to enter into concession to manage forests adjacent to them. However, due to the lack silvicultural capacity of communities to run these forests, many CFAs are forced to bring in collaborators mainly from the private sector that are better equipped in nursery techniques and plantation management. With this in mind, the Management of the CFAs may have to train their members in silvicultural practices, forestry business and improve knowledge on the intricate management of food/cash crops together with trees.

**Conflict Resolution role:** A potential source of conflict is the prevailing attitude of the community versus the attitude required if PFM implementation is to ensure sustainability of the forests. The community still has the attitude that they are fully entitled to the forest land, a right they have been denied for so long and are bitter about. If the forest land were at their discretion, most community members would convert it to agriculture which is perceived to be a more profitable land use. It is a challenge for the CFAs to convince and to change these prevailing community attitudes towards the forests if they are to be effective.

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