AN EVALUATION OF THE POLICY FRAMEWORK FOR COMMUNITY BASED NATURAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT IN KENYA

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Abstract
This study was designed to assess international best practices in Community-Based Natural Resource Management (CBNRM) and how these can inform policy and legal framework for Kenya. It is premised that the CBNRM framework in Kenya is inadequate in making significant contribution to community livelihoods or ensuring sustainable management of natural resources. The study objectives were to (i) undertake a comparative analysis of international CBNRM policies in three selected countries with best practices; (ii) review the policy, legal and institutional framework for CBNRM in Kenya; and (iii) assess the challenges and opportunities for the Ngare Ndare Forest communities under existing CBNRM framework.

Policies and laws in the natural resources sector for Namibia, Botswana, Philippines and Kenya were analysed; and a case study of the Ngare Ndare forest community made. Ngare Ndare forest is indigenous and traverses Meru and Laikipia Counties in northern Kenya. There are six communities that live adjacent to the forest and utilize forest resources for their livelihood. The communities are involved in CBNRM as provided for in sectoral laws, particularly forest, water and wildlife. Purposive sampling was used to select community members who were then interviewed, using an interview guide. Key informants including government officers and non-governmental organisations working in the sectors were also interviewed using interview schedules. Primary data was categorized and analysed using a logical matrix.

The study found that Namibia, Botswana and Philippines have deliberate efforts in making clear policy positions for CBNRM and thus provide international best practices. In Namibia, policies for wildlife, forests, water and land specifically aim at incorporating CBNRM through provisions for management and benefit sharing with communities in a well defined structure. In Botswana, CBNRM is incorporated in development strategies including the National Policy for Rural Development, the National Strategy for Poverty Reduction and Botswana Vision 2016. In the Philippines, CBNRM is largely entrenched in the forest sector through the Environment and Local Government Codes. Whereas the Kenya Constitution 2010 provides for CBNRM, policy and legal provision remains inadequate. A number of policies, such as the Forest Policy (2007) and the Water Policy (1999) acknowledge the need for community involvement in resources management. However, none of these policies currently outlines the principles and practice for
CBNRM in their respective sectors. The Ngare Ndare Forest case shows that there are multiple and conflicting sectoral requirements. Communities have to register several institutions with different requirements to suit different sectors. In addition, there seems to be lack of clear direction within the government institutions on what CBNRM entails. Here, the Kenya Forest Service has transferred responsibility to communities without shared decision-making or economic benefits. The study concludes that: (i) a CBNRM policy should be developed to provide a clear direction and strategies on its practice in Kenya; (ii) CBNRM should be adopted as a development strategy in Kenya; and (iii) there is a need for consistency between policies and laws in the natural resources sector.