

**ESSENTIALS OF A SUSTAINABLE PARTICIPATORY FOREST
MANAGEMENT REGIME. A CASE STUDY OF NTOROSI COMMUNITY
ENVIRONMENTAL GROUP, NAMANGA HILLS FOREST, KAJIADO
DISTRICT.**

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Abstract

Participatory Forest Management (PFM) is a recent development in Kenya, although it has been practised in other countries but with varying policies and programmes. The main objective of this study was to investigate the factors and conditions necessary for a successful PFM. Ntorosi Community Environmental Group was selected for study because of its previous involvement in PFM under the UNDP-GEF East African Biodiversity Cross- Border Project. A detailed questionnaire containing structured and un structured questions were administered to a total of 100 respondents, selected through simple random sampling. The study applied descriptive statistics such as percentages (%) and inferential statistical techniques such as Cross tabulation statistics of chi-square contingency coefficient to analyze the data.

The results showed that the level of education ($\chi^2=0.665$, $\alpha= 0.05$) and the duration (years) local users have lived next to the forest are the key demographic factors that would influence PFM success. Age ($\chi^2=0.424$, $\alpha= 0.05$) and gender ($\chi^2=0.378$, $\alpha=0.05$) are also important factors in designing, planning and implementing PFM initiative. Other factors with respect to community involvement in PFM include income and employment benefits, feeling of community belonging and equitable sharing of resources. However, results indicated that PFM failure to provide these benefits does not necessarily affect community participation. The study noted adequate conservation skills and knowledge among forest adjacent communities, including awareness on forest products, threats and mitigation. These are some key factors that would also influence PFM success. These skills and knowledge however, vary among community members.

Similarly, the level of power and authority conferred to PFM group showed significant influence on sustainable forest management. These include powers and authority to define, formulate and enforce community forest rules and regulations. These community rules and regulations should however, be binding even to all government forest officers in order to motivate other local community members to equally respect the rules.

Hence, in order to enhance success and sustainability of PFM initiative within Namanga hills forest, the study recommends that the KFS and other stakeholders should conduct community sensitization and awareness on the provisions of Forest Act 2005 and opportunities available to them under PFM. Efforts should also be made to prepare a simplified version of Forest Act 2005 and translate the information into vernacular language understood by the community. KFS and other stakeholders should also help the community to comply with provisions of Forest Act 2005 by guiding them through registration process and in development of Forest Management Plan.

The study also recommends piloting of Community Forest Guard Initiative within Namanga hills forests and a further training of PFM Group members on forest conservation and group management skills. More research needs to be carried out on the impact of changing community livelihoods on PFM and the feasibility of innovative programmes such as Eco-tourism, Payment for Environmental Services, commercial herbal medicine and bead work within Namanga hills forest.