

Inappropriate village land use plans impede conservation efforts in Kilosa District, Tanzania

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Summary

Village Land Use Plan is increasingly becoming a tool for land resource management in rural areas of Tanzania. The plan is expected to enhance conservation and reduce resource use conflicts and degradation. Despite the good prospects of the plan and large investments vested in it, little is known about its adoption and implementation. This paper provides the required information, based on interviews administered to households and key informants in two villages located in East Central Tanzania. Results revealed that on average a village land use plan is adopted and implemented by only 45%. Low level of implementation is partly due to inadequate involvement of local community and lack of land suitability analysis during the planning stage. Poor adoption and implementation of land use plans threatens the conservation efforts since land set aside for conservation is used contrary to the prescription.

Introduction

Land use planning in Tanzania was firstly proposed in 1980s to address a perceived problem of environmental degradation associated with poor farming methods. After a decade of institutional reforms, it was officially formalized after the enactment of National Land Act No. 4 of 1999, National Village Land Act No. 5 of 1999 and National Land Use Planning Act No.6 of 2007. Land use planning can be done at national, zonal, regional, district and village levels but this paper focuses only at village level where there are a lot of

resource use conflicts and environmental degradation.

A village land use plan (VLUP) has the potential of reducing landscape fragmentation and land use conflicts; formalizing settlement; modernizing agriculture; improving natural resource conservation; improving tenure security and reducing land grabbing (NLUPC 2006). VLUP is one of the best documents the village government should possess. It is a pre-condition for provision of customary land tenure titles, designation of conservation areas and a requirement for acceptance of any external funded development project or private investment in the

village (Mango and Kalenzi 2011)

The government has in place the comprehensive guidelines for developing and implementing VLUP (NLUPC 2006). However, it appears that the process becomes lengthy and costly if the guidelines are followed. For example, the cost of creating one village land use plan could go as high as Tanzania Shillings 12 000 000 (USD 6 000), an amount that cannot be raised by local governments (Mango and Kalenzi 2011). In order to overcome this challenge, the government invited private sector to facilitate the process of land use planning through provision of financial and

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technical support (Hart et al. 2014; Mango and Kalenzi 2011). Most of the new actors (private sector) have developed their own guidelines-which are time and cost effective but skipped important steps for participatory land use planning. There are growing concerns about the quality of VLUP produced by not following the national guidelines (Hart et al. 2014).

The aim of the present paper is to assess the extent of adoption and implementation of village land use plans by the local community. The paper provides information that can be used by planners and policy makers to develop implementable plans and hence achieve the desired outcomes.

Methodology and results

The study was conducted in Ibingu and Chabima villages in Kilosa District, Morogoro region, Tanzania. Land use plans in both

villages were approved in 2011. The process was financially and technically facilitated by two local NGOs, namely Tanzanian Forest Conservation Group-(TFCG) and Network of forest dependent communities in Tanzania (MJUMITA), but with foreign funding. The NGOs were involved because they were interested in establishing a Village Land Forest Reserve (VLFR) aimed at carbon sequestration through Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation (REDD) pilot project.

Data were collected in 2014, using questionnaires administered randomly to 88 households; 52 in Ibingu and 36 in Chabima. The difference in sample size between the villages was due to a difference in population size between them. The larger population in Ibingu necessitated a larger sample size. In-depth interviews with key informants and reviewing of the plans were also used. The

key informants were the Village Chairman (VC), Village Executive Officer and other people who were leaders in various natural resource committees such as the Environmental Committee, Beekeeping Committee, Forest committee, and Village Land Use Management Committee. Respondents were requested to give their assessments on the implementation of five land use categories identified in the land use plans: Agriculture (crop production), forestry, grazing, settlement, and community services (markets, religion, schools, hospitals, and sports). Respondents were requested to rate their perception on a scale of 1-100%, with 1 as a very low level of implementation and 100% the highest.

Results revealed that on average a village land use plan was implemented by only 45% (Table 1). Generally the adoption in all land use categories was poor, but grazing was unexpectedly extremely low.

Table 1. Assessment of households on adoption and implementation of different components of land use plans

Land use category	Ibingu (n=52)	Chabima (n=36)	Average
Agriculture	47%	47%	47%
Grazing	15%	2%	9%
Forestry	58%	52%	55%
Settlement	62%	56%	59%
Community services	60 %	55 %	58%
Average	48 %	42 %	45%

The main reason for the low level of adoption of the land use plans was explained to be the low level of local communities' participation in the land use planning process. In

Chabima only about 40% of the households were involved in the demarcation of the boundaries of areas allocated to different land uses and in Ibingu only about 20% (Fig. 1). This lack

of participation can be related to the fact that most of the areas allocated to different land use categories were already demarcated on maps by the facilitators (using Geographical

Information System), prior to the start of the actual planning process. The local communities were just required to accept and approve the pre-determined land allocation for different land utilization types that were

imposed top-down from outside on them.

Relatively high degree of participation was reported in seminars that mainly involved few nominated people, mainly village leaders who were rewarded allowances for

participation. To a lesser extent this was also true for meetings. The objectives of these meetings and seminars appears to inform participants of what had been decided rather than taking their opinions on desired future land uses.

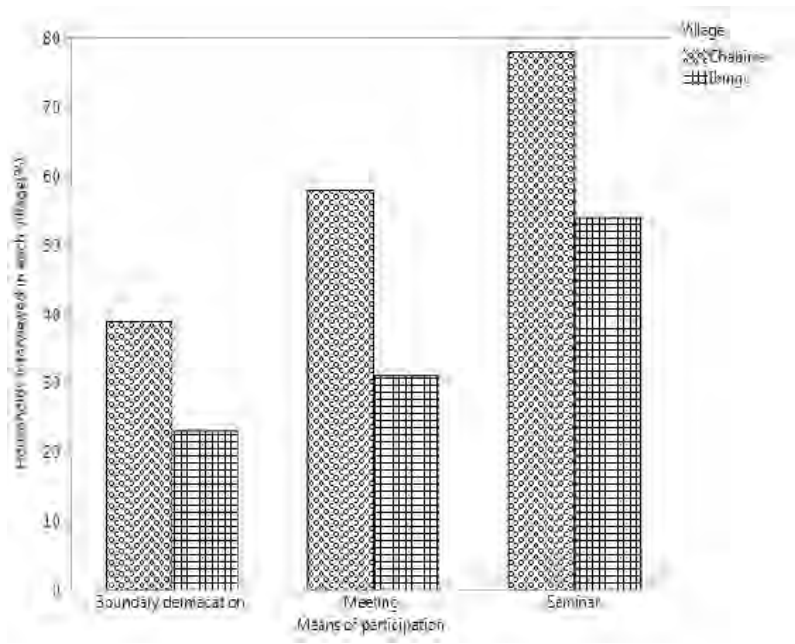


Figure 1: Involvement of households in various activities in land use planning process.

Furthermore, we learned that some land users, in particular shifting cultivators and pastoralists were not represented at all in meetings or seminar. Poor representation of marginalized groups in the community can lead to serious conflicts in the future (Benjaminsen et al. 2009). This lack of involving of the communities during the development of the VLUP was the main cause of poor adoption and failure of the plans. The outsiders who drafted the plans clearly did not understand the socio-economic, cultural, religious, etc. situations in the villages. As a result there were mismatches between proposed

land utilization types, land use requirements and existing socio-economic settings of local communities. Consequently many of these were not implemented or abandoned.

Land utilization categories that were very important for the communities were reduced in size or completely excluded. In Chabima village only a small piece of land was allocated for grazing, thus explaining the low implementation of grazing in that village. In Ibingu village land under shifting cultivation was converted to forest reserve and the farmers resettled to concentrated sub-villages where they were required to practice

conservation agriculture (Kilawe et al. 2018). Poor soil fertility, soil erosion and weed pressure impeded implementation of the proposed conservation agriculture. In studies also in Tanzania, Rioux and San Juan (2015) found that there are barriers and challenges to the implementation of conservation agriculture and that these need to be addressed. Conservation agriculture will not be adopted if it is just simply imposed.

The long distance to the areas allocated to croplands hindered the implementation of proposed concentrated settlement. In many African cultures women are responsible for tending

to the crop fields (planting, weeding, etc.). But they also have household's chores to perform. Thus, crop fields need to be close enough to the homesteads so that the women can perform both duties. In addition a rural "village" is often not the usual type of village with houses close together, but consists of homesteads spread within the village area. These people often do not want to move into a situation where their homes are boxed in between a lot of other homes.

Some areas allocated for community services were not well conceived. For example worshiping and burial areas were located far from settlements, contrary to usual practice in both villages. Most people in the villages prefer to bury their relatives near their ancestors within their homestead area. It was also not normal in the villages to allocate worshiping areas for Muslims and Christians in the same neighborhoods.

Low levels of implementation of the land use plans were also associated with the lack of detailed resource surveys (soil, climate, water, and vegetation) and land suitability evaluations. Key informants revealed that boundary demarcation for the different land use categories was based on convenience for the developers of the VLUPs, who skipped the processes of resource surveying and land suitability evaluation in order to cut down the cost of land use planning, rather than the qualities of land.

Discussion and conclusion

Findings of this study showed that the village land use plans are implemented by only 45%. The result implies that majority of the land (55%) is used contrary to the prescriptions of the VLUP. Low adoption of the plans has and diminished the outcomes desired by the outsiders who drafted the plans, such as reduction of deforestation and enhancement of conservation. It has been shown in other studies that land use conflicts and deforestation have increased despite land use planning in Kilosa District (Benjaminsen et al. 2009; Kilawe et al. 2018).

In this case the poor adoption could mainly be attributed to exclusion of the communities during the drafting of the plans. The objectives and priorities of the outside planners were clearly in conflict with those of the communities. This study illustrates the fallacy of a top-down planning process that ignored the practices and livelihood strategies of locals, which are adapted to their circumstances. Facilitators dominated the planning process, and shaped it to fit in with their interest – carving out protected areas. The local communities were used purely as rubber stamp to pass readymade decisions by inviting them to participate in meetings where superficial information about the process was provided. This resonates with studies of Loveless (2014); Moyo et al. (2016); Hart et al. (2014); and Igwe and Croucher (2007) who argue that experts manipulate the so-called participatory process in favour of their

interests. Exclusion of local communities during the land use planning process creates tensions and frequent conflicts among local communities and between local communities and the village government and/or with the investors, thus diminishing the usefulness of the land use plans. On a broader scale it should resonate the statement by Rosenthal (1977); "It must be kept in mind that agricultural development is intended to benefit the community, not to gratify the donor."

Poor implementation of the land use plan was, furthermore, associated with a lack of physical/biological resource surveys and land suitability evaluation. Furthermore surveys of available infrastructure, services and socio-economic conditions need to be done (URT 1999)

All the problems encountered in these two VLUPs could have been avoided if the developers of the plans adhered to the legal requirements of Tanzania's Land Use Planning Act (NLUPC, 2006), which stipulates that

- Participatory approaches must be used in land use planning. With a participatory approach is meant that the community must be central to the planning process. The outsiders should be involved only in a facilitating/advisory capacity and should not be dominant.
- The necessary resource surveys and land suitability evaluation must be done.

Recommendations and suggestions for further research

1. In order to increase adoption of land use plans, we recommend the involvement of **all** land users categories in **all** steps of land use planning right from the start. Participation should not be limited to seminars and meetings during which attempts are made to convince communities to participate in preconceived plans that are imposed top-down on them. A true Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) approach should be followed.
2. In order to match the proposed land use categories or land utilization types with land qualities, we recommend that the required resource surveys and land suitability evaluations be conducted.
3. We suggest studies to determine the extent to which top-down non-participatory approaches to development have aggravated land degradation and conflicts.

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