

ABSTRACT

Forests enhance conservation of the environment, biodiversity, water, and soil resources while significantly contributing to the livelihoods of forest adjacent communities. The Constitution of Kenya 2010 recognizes the importance of forests and therefore obligates the State to increase tree cover to 10% of the country's total land area, the minimum recommended for ecological sustainability. In line with improving governance, the Constitution devolves the country into 47 counties and further provides that the national and county governments are distinct and interdependent. One of the objects and principles of the devolved government is to recognize the rights of communities to manage their own affairs and further their development. It therefore reinforces the Forests Act, 2005 that aims at decentralizing the management of forests through formation of Community Forest Associations (CFAs). This study seeks to capture and explore the experiences of implementing Participatory Forest Management (PFM) through the Community Forest Associations (CFAs) in Kenya; how this may have changed the relationship between forest resources and local communities who live adjacent to the forests; the extent to which local communities consider themselves part of the process; how this may have contributed to poverty alleviation; and the challenges that still need to be tackled by the forestry sector to contribute fully to sustainable forest governance and poverty alleviation. The study focuses on Sururu CFA involved in participatory management of the Mau Forest complex.

Keywords: livelihoods, community forest associations, participatory forest management, sustainable forest governance, poverty alleviation