Learning about
Community-based Worker Systems
Newsletter 6 • June 2007

community-based worker project

Improving livelihoods through Community Forestry Advisors (CFAs) - the Butuntumula Pilot Forestry Project

Editor's notes

This newsletter is targeted at those considering or using community-based worker systems as a mechanism for improving service delivery especially to poorer communities. It is a product of a 4-country action-research project which has been testing CBW approaches to improve service delivery in the natural resources and HIV/AIDS sectors. The project is managed by Khanya-aicdd, and is working alongside partners in Uganda, Kenya, South Africa and Lesotho.

As well as providing an update on the CBW project that will complete later this year, this newsletter focuses on the role of Community Forestry Advisors (CFAs) working to enhance livelihoods in Uganda's Luweero District. It gives some insight into how community-based approaches can facilitate improved use and management of forests to improve livelihood opportunities. Our thanks to Brad Burger and Lauren Groth from University of Kwa Zulu Natal from whose recent field visit to Uganda has informed the basis of this newsletter.

Overview

Forestry is crucial to the lives of millions of Ugandans, particularly for in the poorest sections of society. Until recently, the dependence of poor people on forest resources, and their ability to improve their livelihoods through forestry, has not been adequately recognised. Many people rely on forestry for all or part of their livelihoods, and it is often the poorest who depend most critically on forest resources for their well-being and survival in the absence of other livelihood assets and opportunities.

Livelihood opportunities associated with forestry include tree production, collaborative forest management, establishment of tree nurseries, agro-forestry, non-wood products, improved marketing and trading in forest products and alternative income sources[1]. Effective forest services are vital if the communities are to benefit from these opportunities. With diminishing budgets and incentives, inadequate livelihoods perspectives as well as inappropriate skills, government led forestry services in Uganda have been unable to meet the rising demands of the rural communities. Community-based forestry advisory services have gained recognition for their contribution to address some of these challenges.

Butuntumula Pilot Forestry Project was started by Environmental Alert (EA) in 2002/2003, through a grant from the Department for International Development (DFID). The project spanned seven parishes comprising 52 villages. The project aimed to bring about improvements in the livelihoods of vulnerable groups in the Luweero District through both policy and practice while raising awareness about the value of managing natural resources and how communities can utilise the environment to improve their livelihoods.

Community-based workers known as community forestry advisors (CFAs) were to be the central component of the project, acting as exemplary models for the community through engagement in a range of activities such as planting pine and grevillea trees, and tending to bee-hives.

At the inception of the project four key groups of stakeholders were involved: the community, Environmental Alert (acting as project coordinator), district government (building structures to accommodate project at different levels) and the management committee, which held the duty of overseeing the entire project. The management committee comprised representation from both community and government interests including; the sub-county chairman, district forest officer and planner, the sub-county chief, and other local leadership.

Box 1 Who are CFAs?

CFAs are members of a community, trained to deliver a suite of services that support improved use and management of forest resources by communities. These services often cover 'local extension support, small business support, specialist advice, providing information centrally and national co-ordination and advocacy.'[2] For instance services in the form of local extension involve organising group nurseries, skills in nursery production, marketing and input supply.

Selection of CFAs

Initially, the selection process was supported by Environmental Alert. General meetings were organised to familiarise community members with the natural resource management project. The communities were then invited to form interest groups amongst themselves (forestry, beekeeping, agriculture, etc.) and to select those community members they felt would best represent these interests in the CBW programme. Selection criteria was established by the local communities and included, being a local resident, having secondary education, having access to land and being committed to the community. These criteria did discourage participation of women which contradicted the EA's principle of supporting their involvement in rural development strategies.

Since this initial selection, five members have left the CFA programme citing personal circumstances. The remaining 16 are comprised of 13 men and three women. The time requirement of being a CFA varies by activity and area. The CFAs interviewed suggested that their duties take approximately two-three days per week to complete. CFA's working on beekeeping noted that the activity required them to check on their bees everyday to prevent insect infestation. While this is not a large amount of time it is a daily activity.

Accountability

The CFAs are accountable to the management committee who deal with problems that arise. The CFAs also have a working constitution, established with the help of EA, which established guidelines for CFA behaviour, expectations, and selection.

Training and support

The project has provided CFAs with significant training and continued support through Environmental Alert and the National Agricultural Advisory Service (NAADS)[3]. In delivering the training, the 21 CFAs were equipped with skills to give local extension support covering beekeeping, woodlot and agro-forestry. This training took place over two separate one-week events. Within each parish, three CFAs were placed, one in each discipline, with the mandate to share news about the project with others in the community, increase awareness about the importance of forestry and the environment, and stand as exemplary models of the CFA programme. The EA provided one year of on-going training and support to the CFAs. At the end of that year, EA left the project and it was transferred to the government with the intent of being largely self-sustainable. The Butuntumula Forestry Project has became an element of the sub-county plan, and is factored into local planning and budgets. NAADS took the primary lead in identifying gaps left by EA and provided training in those specific areas. As a programme designed to establish an effective and sustainable demand-driven agricultural advisory service that will enable farmers to identify and pursue opportunities to increase their own productivity and incomes in a sustainable manner, NAADS support proved to be an important aspect of the on-going success of CFAs in Luweero.

The project though has been disappointed by the lack of support from any local agricultural extension officers tasked to provide support to the CFAs in problem solving, training, and inputs. CFAs interviewed indicated that they had not yet been visited by an extension officer in the three years that the project has been running. This was a visible source of frustration for them in the light of their ongoing struggles with insects, plant diseases, and obtaining access to forestry knowledge. The lack of on-going support from the extension officer has been problematic for the CFAs, but fortunately, has not discouraged them from continuing to improve their work.

Incentives

Initially incentives in the form of bicycle allowances, training and entrepreneurial skills development, income growth and increase in the value of their land[4] contributed to fuelling the enthusiasm behind the work of the CFAs. The energy levels and motivation were still high a year into the project's implementation.

Three years on, when the CFAs were asked about their motivation to continue to participate in this project their answers varied, and encompassed an understanding of both personal and communal 'goods.' On a personal level, the CFAs felt that the project allowed them to become entrepreneurs, and that by spreading the word to other community members they were also creating a larger product base to be sold and traded at the market. They suggested that the continued expansion of the project directly supported their endeavours. At a larger level, the CFAs pointed to the recognisable need to create greater community awareness of the environment and consideration for conservation.

CFAs are able to increase their household income through the marketing of their products and are highly advantaged by their location, which borders the main road from the north into Kampala. They sell their products, such as fruit and honey, at road side stands and have also increased their access to the markets in Kampala and Luweero. Honey production has expanded to the point of packaging the product and commercial distribution within Kampala. One of the more innovative initiatives of the EA, before it withdrew, was to establish linkages between the CFAs and local microprocessors which remain fairly close to the communities themselves.

Box 2 Unanticipated incentives...

Another less frequently considered incentive is the value forestry adds to property. The addition of trees and beautification of land adds resource value that exists almost independently of the CFA. One CFA, while dedicated to his woodlot and fruit trees initially, fell ill for the span of over a year and was unable to attend to the tree plantation he had begun. Although almost half of his trees perished, half continued to grow and bear fruit despite the CFA's absence. Upon regaining his strength, he was able to return to what he had started, and carry on as normal, albeit with a lessened number of trees. The CFA's land, as an asset, retained its value despite his illness and neglect. This example, while only one, may have strong implications for the livelihoods and livelihood strategies of those suffering with HIV/AIDS.

Despite such benefits, dissemination of the CFAs' work into the local communities has not been without its challenges. Although community members have begun to take notice of the CFAs' work in tree plantations and in their own backyards, many have been reluctant to participate in such activities themselves, as the demand of planting trees is seen as __time consuming,__ __very hard__ and requires __ too much waiting.__ Thus, CFAs must battle against the communities focus on short-term initiatives with immediate rewards, trying to convince neighbours that long-term projects such as growing trees, while requiring an initial waiting period, will benefit the individual and their environment tremendously once fully developed.

Through extensive liaison with the local governing council (local Chairman), the CFAs have been able to garner significant support for the project. This led to the integration of the advisory services into local development planning. For instance, the project was incorporated into sub-county plans with significant consideration during local budgeting.

Success factors and challenges

Through **forging links** with local microprocessors, the CFAs were able to **tap into existing markets** and create a sustainable outlet for various forest products. Farmers were also able to sell seedlings commercially. Other benefits included fruits as a source of food and improved soil nutrients to boost farm income. Training received was put to good use in improving the quality of forest products e.g. honey. In addition, farmers and CFAs learned new skills in tree nursery management and planting[5] and became aware that tree-planting greatly contributes to the value of a piece of land.

A number of factors have contributed to the sustainability of the established CBW system within the Butuntumula Forestry Initiative:

- The **role played by CFAs and the facilitating agents** (FAs) in **generating goodwill** and support around the initiative.

Through planned and consistent sensitisation events, they were responsible for motivating and organising demonstrations of the results of their experimentation. This was critical if the project was to be favourably received in the community.

- The **ongoing skills development and support** given to the CFAs was a key component of the programme which literally 'guaranteed' their ability to serve the community. It also proved to be a major incentive in sustaining the energy behind the project. And with increased knowledge and skills in the specialist areas, the CFAs began to receive recognition for their efforts within their community. The knowledge seeking and information sharing behaviour of CFAs demonstrates that the **training has equipped them** to become '*an accessible source of appropriate information and advice*' [6]
- **Exemplary efforts by the local chairman** which have, to some extent, compensated for the insufficient agricultural support. The local chairman is highly aware of the CFAs' need for continued support and how the project can both integrate with, and support, existing government initiatives. Through the local chairman, Butuntumula has been integrated into sub-county plans, and is taken into account during local budgeting. He has also ensured that continued planning for the project happens at a participatory level, with CFAs and the community heavily involved.
- Ongoing and continued support received from institutional partners including:
    - **the community:** participatory approaches to planning drew heavily on community involvement to determine which farming practice areas to work with (bee-keeping, woodlot and agro-forestry). This was also reflected in the criteria used to select CFAs, as well as the support given by the local leadership and integration with existing government initiatives.
    - **the commercial sector:** who forged links between CFAs and local micro-processors as a means to access local markets
    - **the government:** who integrated the project into sub-county plans, and local budgetary planning. It is likely that this rooted the CFAs into the project. In addition, government support was also received through creating a local dam and drilling boreholes.

However, the project was not without its setbacks. For instance, there were significant **gender disparities** among the CFAs, of whom only three out of 16 were women. Coupled with the fact that laws pertaining to '*access, control and ownership and inheritance of land (which) discriminate against women, who depend on their husbands to acquire land*' meant that women were typically excluded from being CFAs. Some inertia was experienced when members from the community began to weigh the long term benefits of tree-planting against the more immediate benefits of planting short term cash crops. The CFAs had to make a good case if they were to convince the community to plant trees as opposed to other crops.

A year after establishing the project, Environmental Alert withdrew and it was transferred to government with a view to becoming self-sustainable. At this point, the initiative began to experience **problems with funding**. This had a huge impact on CFA training support as well as the government provision of extension services to the community. As a result, the CFAs experienced setbacks in the form of insect attacks and plant diseases afflicting their crop and limited access to forestry knowledge [7].

Lessons learnt: towards 'good practice' in implementing a CFA system

The project has become a feature of development planning at the sub-county level and in local budgetary planning, with the CFAs playing a key role in community mobilisation and participatory planning for local service delivery. So the CFAs are playing dynamic roles beyond provision of advice and support on utilisation and management of forestry resources.

The Butuntumula demonstrates some key lessons relevant to CBW systems in other contexts:

- CBW systems operate better when they are developed with a **cohesive structure** that brings key institutional partners together, with their roles clearly spelt out.
- Gaining **a clear understanding** of the issue at hand (e.g. forestry, animal-health or home-based care) in relation to different social groups within a community, can help build a sound foundation for a CBW system in a community. Through identifying the different social groups, one can establish needs and capacities within a community to inform decisions on the demand for community based services. Using a livelihoods analysis is one way to do this, and if conducted properly it should also reflect the roles, responsibilities and capacity that exists at different institutional levels e.g. communities, service providers, districts, national and ministerial[8].
- Through providing **ongoing demand-driven training** and regular follow-up sessions, CBWs are able to tap into specialist knowledge and develop a good base for a pro-active approach to generating solutions to regular problems. In this particular case, the longer-term training was provided by NAADS who took the lead in identifying gaps in the training programme, and providing training to meet those gaps.
- Where a project is being run by multiple stakeholders, careful thought needs to be given to its sustainability in the event of a key stakeholder withdrawing their inputs. A close analysis of the resource base has to be done at the inception phase. In which case, there are likely to be major implications for the long term sustainability of the project if this is not carefully thought through. Besides, the absence of an **adequate resource base** such as capacity, finances and even knowledge will reduce the effectiveness of the system.

Update on CBW Project

10 - 13 April 2007, 4-country CBW Workshop

In April 2007, a 4-country CBW workshop was held in Kampala, Uganda to share and learn from experiences over the past 3 years of the project, as well as findings from recent evaluations of pilots and national workshops held in each country. Following the workshop, a report has been prepared and this addresses the key issues that were discussed during the workshop as follows:

- Feedback on site visits
- Sharing from the final country reports
- Group work on specific issues, and
- The way forward in developing specific country action plans

The full report is available from the Khanya-aicdd website.

Upcoming Events

July 2007

9 - 13 July, Bloemfontein South Africa
A writing workshop to develop guidelines for implementing CBW models with partner representatives.

September 2007

3 - 5 September, Kenya
CBW Regional Workshop will be held to promote an understanding of the CBW system to policymakers and practitioners and to obtain their commitment to support its implementation in their respective countries.

19 - 21 September 2007, Nairobi, Kenya
Presentation at the African Palliative Care Association (APCA) Conference 2007. The CBW presentation will be on Improving pro-poor service delivery through use of community-based workers.

For further information contact Patrick Mbullu at patrick@khanya-aicdd.org

Websites on community forestry

Environmental Alert

Multistakeholder Forestry Programme

Regional Community Forestry Training Center (RECOFTC)

Forest Governance Learning Group

Forest Action, Nepal

Resources on community forestry

Community Forest Management
FARM-Africa's Participatory Forest Management Programme in Tanzania and Ethiopia shows that involving the local community in forest management is key to conserving forest resources, both now and for the future. FARM-Africa, the Ethiopian Government, the Government of Tanzania and local communities work together to establish their rights and responsibilities over forest resources. Ultimately, communities, with government support, become custodians of the forest.
Source: http://www.farmafrica.org.uk/documents/38.PDF

Learning by doing: Participatory research with forest user groups in Nepal by Branney et al,
This article explores the meaning of participatory research within the context of forestry research. Based in Nepal, it was compiled by researchers in the Forest User Groups Forest Management Project (FFMP) who adopted a learning-by-doing approach to developing participatory forest research. Their aim was to develop and test a methodology based on monitoring and reflecting on their own experiences and those of the participating forest user groups. The paper asks: 'What does participatory research really mean? How is it done, and does it really work?' and tries to answer these questions using the authors' experience of working with forest user groups in the hills of Nepal.
Source: http://www.etfrn.org/ETFRN/workshop/users/chapter_7.pdf

Social learning at work: a case study of community forestry in Nepal by Ojha et al,
Evidence from community forestry in Nepal is presented to demonstrate how such knowledge building and political processes within and between key CBNRM institutions are related to the success in achieving the two goals of environmental conservation and poverty reduction. In particular, the current status, challenges, and opportunities for future improvement as seen from the perspective of social learning are highlighted, using three key components as a basis: adaptive management; bounded conflict and social capital; and micro-macro governance linkages. Some conclusions and policy suggestions are then made as contributions to the wider contexts in which CBNRM approach is practiced. (Author's abstract)
Source: http://www.forestaction.org/publications/6_Discussion%20Papers/6_3.pdf

A livelihoods approach to redesign of forestry services in Uganda, Mike Harrison and Ian Goldman
This paper presents an innovative approach to analysing livelihoods and institutions to develop services that can exploit forestry opportunities for the poor. The approach involves community-based, district and centrally driven services, from micro to macro and has been applied immediately to deepen Uganda's National Forest Plan processes. The pilot initiatives now under way to take these services forward are effectively a form of business process re-engineering which could easily be applied to other sectors.

Source: http://www.livelihoods.org/lessons/docs/Uganda.doc

---

1 Goldman et al, 2004 'Reform of forestry advisory services: learning from practice in Uganda' Natural Resources Perspectives, Overseas Development Institute

2 NAADS took the primary lead in identifying gaps after the EA left and provided the ongoing training in those specific areas

3 Goldman et al, 2004 'Reform of forestry advisory services: learning from practice in Uganda' Natural Resources Perspectives, Overseas Development Institute

4 Goldman et al, 2004 'Reform of forestry advisory services: learning from practice in Uganda' Natural Resources Perspectives, Overseas Development Institute

5 Goldman et al, 2004 'Reform of forestry advisory services: learning from practice in Uganda' Natural Resources Perspectives, Overseas Development Institute

6 A livelihoods approach to redesign of forestry services in Uganda http://www.livelihoods.org/lessons/docs/Uganda.doc