

Community Participation in Natural Resources Management in Malawi

A Case of Dzalanyama Forest Reserve Management in Lilongwe

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Abstract

The sustainability of the environment and its resources always depend much on how the community manages it. In many parts of the world the problems of environmental destruction have been increasing as a result of human struggle to obtain their daily needs. This has led to increased effects of productivity and human health, and hence becoming threat to the survival of man and other living organisms.

The Malawi National Environmental Policy-1996 (NEP) emphasizes on community awareness and participation in environmental and natural resources management. The NEP (1996:7) specific policy goal 2.2.4 "Enhance public awareness of the importance of sound environmental understanding of various environmental issues and participation in addressing them." Policy goal 2.2.5 "promote co-operation with other governments and relevant international/regional organizations, local communities, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and private sectors in the management and protection of environment. And guiding principal 2.3 (f) "The participation of private sector, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), and community-based organizations (CBOs), is critical to improved protection, conservation, management and sustainable utilization or Malawi's natural resources.

Since the formation of the 1996 policy, little has been done for evaluation and analysis on its effective implementation in many parts of the country and hence little is known about implementation in many parts of the country and hence little is known about implementation and challenges it faces especially in the section of community participation. It was therefore the intention of this study to undertake an evaluation on community participation in forest resources management in Malawi, particularly Dzalanyama forest reserve. The study aimed to evaluate and appreciate various ways in which communities participate and interacted in management and control of forest resources. To achieve the above objectives, the study has the following objectives: (i) identify the current state of the forest reserve; (ii) identify ways in which communities benefit from forest resources at the family level;

(iii) examine the extent to which community participation is taken into consideration in instituting forest resource management practices; and (iv) identify factors influencing community participation in forest resource management.