

End of Project Popular Science Description

Introduction

In 2000s, especially during the early part of it, there was a great rush in acquiring land for tree planting in Njombe and Iringa regions in the Southern Highlands, Tanzania following increased demand for timber during the reported period. This resulted in an on-going afforestation driven by domestic investments (Ngaga 2011; Ministry of Natural Resources and Tourism and Indufor 2011; Ministry of Natural Resources and Tourism and Finland 2013). The above defines the context of the Timber Rush project, which was formulated and later implemented from 2016 to 2020 in Kilolo and Mufindi districts as well as in Njombe, Wanging'ombe and Makete districts in Iringa and Njombe region, respectively. Its implementation was collaborative by involving four the following major partners: Sokoine University of Agriculture (College of Social Sciences and Humanities), Danish Institute for International Studies (DIIS), Department of Food and Resource Economics, University of Copenhagen (UoC), and LGAs in Njombe and Iringa regions. The intended project beneficiaries included village tree growers, government officials at different levels of governance as well as timber value chain actors.

The project was informed by two bodies of literatures: the *resource rush literature* (see Tokar and Magdoff 2009; Fairhead, Leach, and Scoones 2012; LeBillon 2014) as well as the *access literature* (see Pedersen 2013; Wolford et al. 2013). Its overall aim was to contribute to a more equitable distribution of benefits from private plantations on village land through evidence-based policy making. Its specific objectives were two-fold: the investigation of the scale and drivers of the current investments in the timber rush on one hand and the impact of investments in land for timber production on local people's access to and benefits from land and other resources on the other. Project work involved a series of field work activities guided by the mixed methods research design involving qualitative and quantitative approaches to data collection and analysis. Research design and implementation of project activities involved collaborative efforts involving research team members based at SUA in Tanzania as well as those at DIIS and UoC in Denmark. The project outcome was its contribution to strengthening capacity in the social science approach to the study of forest and natural resource management at Sokoine University of Agriculture (SUA).

Results

The project addressed various aspects regarding the Timber Rush. Overall, it has analysed the roles of domestic investors and thereby contributed to the literature that hitherto had focused more on foreign-led investments. By analysing the diversity of domestic investors, the project has also demonstrated that the impacts of these investors on local livelihoods differ at the local level. For the purpose of this presentation we pay attention to results that have implications regarding equitable distribution of benefits from private plantations in village land. The first level is the household where the distribution of benefits is influenced by intra-household gender relations. The other level is the market involving the buyers and sellers. Drawing from the project work, the key players at household level are husband and wife. The major finding is unequal power relationship between married couples, which is evident at the level of decision making regarding the allocation of resources, namely labour and income. More specifically, men have control over income obtained from the sale of timber because of their having a firm grip over its marketing through transactions that are opaque to their spouses.

On the other hand, the project findings show that there is unequal distribution of benefits (in terms of income) accrued from non-industrial timber forestry (NIPF). In the transaction process, the

sellers of trees, the tree growers, receive low income as compared to the buyers, the middlemen and retailers. This unequal distribution of income between the sellers and buyers is aggravated by the government regulations which constrain the tree growers' access to regional markets that are more profitable markets than those at the village and district levels.

Conclusions

In light of the results presented above, the following conclusions can be drawn. In reference to unequal sharing of benefits from tree growing at household level, it can be argued that mere ownership of woodlots by women is not a feasible pathway to having control over income obtained from the sales of timber from their woodlots. Regarding transactions involving the sellers and buyers, the contribution of non-industrial private forestry to poverty alleviation is stifled by cumbersome district and state regulations that limit actors' access to profitable markets.

Recommendations

Lack of control over income among women limit the benefits they can access from their involvement in tree growing. The recommendations that are feasible and actionable may include educating women not only on their rights but also on claiming them. Also, educating women on markets and marketing of timber as well as linking them up with markets could help in ameliorating the prevailing situation, which works against them. On the other hand, in order for NIPFs to contribute significantly and sustainably to the income of actors (especially tree growers), the government, through the Ministry of Natural Resources and Tourism (MNRT), should review the regulations governing the timber value chain. Specifically, barriers that limit tree growers and other actors from gaining access to the market should be minimized or completely removed. This is because tree growers are the most-affected actors in the chain, the formation and/or strengthening of their associations for timber marketing would help them participate in the nodes with higher returns. Also, through associations, they (tree growers) can lobby for regulations that are relevant to their context.

References

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