

# Natural Resource Governance in Sumbawanga and Kilombero, Tanzania

Enhancing effective, inclusive and equitable governance



## Introduction

IUCN facilitated natural resource governance assessments of the Kilombero and Sumbawanga landscapes in the Southern Agricultural Growth Corridor of Tanzania (SAGCOT) in 2017 and 2019, respectively. SAGCOT aims to achieve “a transformed, commercially viable agriculture sector in Tanzania that enhances food security, improves livelihoods and ensures environmental sustainability.”<sup>1</sup> The assessments were based on the interventions of the “Sustainability and Inclusion Strategy for Growth Corridors in Africa” (SUSTAIN-Africa) programme.<sup>2</sup> Beginning in 2014, SUSTAIN-Africa is a 10-year initiative, funded by the Netherlands, that aims to

promote inclusive and climate resilient growth in development corridors.

The governance assessments aim to reveal the state of natural resource governance in the two landscapes and the extent to which the SUSTAIN-Africa programme made contributions to strengthening governance. SUSTAIN-Africa provided a vantage point from which to understand and assess the context of natural resource governance of Kilombero and Sumbawanga, as well as ways to improve inclusivity, equity and rights of rights-holders and stakeholders, especially those who are often at risk of marginalisation when large private sector initiatives are prioritised. The assessments show the

<sup>1</sup> <http://sagcot.co.tz/>

<sup>2</sup> Assessments for both Sumbawanga and Kilombero looked at governance in the landscapes. The Sumbawanga assessment also evaluated the SUSTAIN project.

importance of equitable, effective and sustainable natural resource governance in SAGCOT, grounded in a detailed understanding of and respect for the rights, knowledge and capacities of communities and groups within the corridor. The assessment uses the [Natural Resource Governance Framework](#) (NRGF), developed by IUCN to guide decision-makers at all levels (including national, sub-national and local governing bodies; civil society organisations; donors; private sector actors; and other actors whose decisions impact governance) to make better and more just decisions on the use and management of natural resources and the distribution of nature's benefits. It follows the NRGF principles (see box) for inclusive, effective and equitable governance.

#### NRGF Principles

1. Inclusive decision-making
2. Recognition and respect for tenure rights
3. Recognition of and respect for diverse cultures, knowledge and institutions
4. Devolution
5. Strategic vision, direction and learning
6. Coordination and coherence
7. Sustainable and equitably shared resources
8. Accountability
9. Fair and effective rule of law
10. Access to justice and conflict resolution

#### Governance Strengths

Overall, there are relatively strong legal, policy and institutional frameworks in place for enabling equitable, effective and sustainable natural resource governance on village land in Sumbawanga and Kilombero (with more limited options in other land categories, including general land and protected areas). These include:

- Principle 1: Inclusive participation. Existing policies provide for Water User Associations (WUAs), Village Forest Management Committees (VFMCs), Village Natural Resource Committees (VNRCs), Catchment Management Committees (CMCs) and Catchment Forums, among others. These collectively can create platforms for inclusive decision-making. They also complement the general consultative structures, especially the village assemblies.
- Principle 2: Tenure rights. The Land Act, Village Land Act and Land Use Planning Act comprise part of the legal framework enabling implementation of Village Land Use Plans (VLUPs) and (individual and group) Certificates of Customary Rights of Ownership (CCROs). These acts, plans and certificates are the main frameworks for claiming tenure rights.
- Principle 5: Strategic vision, direction and learning. Various regional and district strategies can be used to define collective visions and mobilise actions that reflect the differentiated and collective values and interests of rights-holders. The SUSTAIN programme worked through national-level policies to guide regional SAGCOT initiatives. In addition, VLUPs and village bylaws can be used to lay out integrated plans for land use in villages.
- Principle 6: Vertical and horizontal coordination. The hierarchy of structures from the community to the regional level enable coordinated decision-making. Local authorities include the village government (village council and assembly), ward government and higher-level district government authorities. These local institutions impact village-level activities, including VLUPs, bylaws and General Management Plans for forests and wildlife reserves. Regional authorities include the district's technical and political structures. Local and regional structures coordinate with central government authorities such as the National Land Use Planning Commission, Basin Authorities and the Tanzania Forest Services Agency.
- Principle 7: Benefit-sharing. There are a number of national-level funds and frameworks, such as the Forest Fund, Wildlife Fund, National Environmental Trust Fund and REDD+ (though it is important to note that, while these are provided for in policy, some are not operational) that guide decisions on organising funds for conservation action and for enabling equitable benefit-sharing. The village assembly also plays an important role in approving specific benefit distribution plans for use and management of resources within village boundaries, such as plans from Village Land Forest Reserves (VLFs).
- Principle 8: Accountability. The country has established guidelines on actors, responsibilities and mandates for resource management (though guidelines are less clear regarding resources in general land, which is land that is not part of village land or reserve land). These guidelines provide a basis for holding responsible parties accountable through the established institutions (described in principle 1).
- Principles 9 and 10: Rule of law and conflict resolution. Legal and grievance mechanisms are in place at all levels. Tanzania law enables local actors to use local institutions for land-related grievance and conflict resolution at the local and/or village level.

#### Governance Challenges

In practice, there are strengths and weaknesses in the implementation of existing frameworks. Challenges are explored in this section, followed by recommendations for improving the implementation of equitable pathways for natural resource governance in Tanzania. Governance challenges in the Sumbawanga and Kilombero landscapes are largely related to implementing enabling laws and policies.

#### Village Land Use Planning (VLUP) and issuance of Certificates of Customary Rights of Ownership (CCRO)

- VLUPs aim to enable the articulation and implementation of a village's collective vision. In practice, VLUPs vary widely in how accurately they reflect local knowledge and different groups' rights. Often, local knowledge is not adequately integrated in the planning process (e.g. undermined by technical information) to guide the VLUPs.

- While CCRO issuance has beneficial outcomes, the rapid pace and process for individual CCRO raised concerns including exclusions, adverse impacts on collective natural resource governance and unclear tenure arrangements for some groups, such as youth or pastoralists, particularly where land is scarce. Private actors can use individual CCRO issuance to prioritise their interests, at the risk of undermining marginalised groups. Wider use of group CCROs may address some of these concerns.

#### Community-based natural resource management (CBNRM) and other platforms for inclusive governance

- CBNRM arrangements supported in Tanzanian policy represent critically important opportunities, and their implementation is expanding. However, the scope of implementation remains limited due in part to capacity and funding limitations.
- Community resource management institutions vary in the extent to which they recognise and empower communities in governing local resources. For example, village councils and assemblies have substantial governing power in Community Based Forest Management (CBFM) initiatives. Wildlife Management Areas (WMAs) are governed by inter-village or multi-level bodies, which may vary in accountability to village governments. In Joint Forest Management (JFM), higher levels of government engage with villages as partners, but often result in devolved management rather than empowered, shared decision-making. SUSTAIN and other programmes should be aware of the different CBNRM options and their impacts.
- In Sumbawanga and Kilombero, other regional-level decision-making platforms also exist but face limitations, such as capacity and funding. In particular, most rights-holders and other stakeholders have limited knowledge and access to these higher-level platforms.

#### Accountability and Coordination

- Processes for holding duty bearers accountable and seeking redress are often weak, especially those beyond the local level, where the time and costs required to hold leaders accountable are often too high to pursue.
- Coordination across natural resource sectors and levels is closely linked to both inclusive decision-making and accountability. For example, when coordination breaks down, local actors cannot enforce their bylaws, which undermines effectiveness as well as people's sense that their participation in drafting the bylaws was significant. These breakdowns can be due to capacity issues, resource constraints and/or accountability challenges.

#### Other cross-cutting considerations

- Some distinctions between land categories are unclear or contested (e.g. general land versus village land, especially when discussing forest resources),

which contributes to disputes and insecure tenure rights.

- Pending changes to the National Land Policy raise several questions, such as resettlement of people from areas facing land shortages.

### **Governance Considerations and Recommendations**

Below are considerations and recommendations for further improving natural resource governance in Sumbawanga and Kilombero. They are relevant for SUSTAIN and similar programmes, governing bodies and other rights-holders and stakeholders. They draw on the governance strengths and challenges described above, as well as other widely applicable best practices identified within the SUSTAIN programme.

#### Establish and enhance processes for inclusive decision-making, with supportive resources

Inclusive, equitable governance is not a passive exercise. It requires political will, dedicated resources and a range of capacities, including to establish and implement fair agreements on the generation and sharing of individual and collective benefits and costs. This is enabled in part through effective processes for engagement. Governing actors and programmes such as SUSTAIN should strengthen the environmental sector quarterly stakeholder meetings, e.g. by using them to make decisions and enhance accountability in programme interventions. This should include appropriate representation and participation (enabling community voice and power-sharing in decision-making), transparent discussion of agendas and accountability for decisions made. Inclusive processes should be scaled-up across the landscape.

#### Enable accountability and coordination, with capacity

Accountability – including for carrying out responsibilities and upholding rights – requires positive, proactive and coordinated measures at multiple levels. It also requires supportive resources and capacities. The role of capacity in accountability is both critical and frequently overlooked. SUSTAIN and other actors can help address duty bearer capacity gaps that undermine effective and equitable governance, in addition to recognising and appropriately supporting the capacity of community members and local institutions.

While often overlooked, NGOs and the private sector are among the actors who impact governance, and they also need to be held accountable. IUCN and other actors should be aware of how they impact local institutions and shape the governance context – striving to appropriately support improved governance while ensuring that in all cases they do not create or exacerbate governance concerns. Policies and mechanisms should be in place to hold them accountable (for example, IUCN has social and environmental policies and grievance mechanisms for SUSTAIN and other programmes).

Access to information is also key to transparency, accountability and rule of law. This includes proactive and timely sharing of accessible information about natural resource-related laws, policies and actions by



government. Likewise, NGOs, the private sector and other actors should proactively share accessible information about activities, policies and grievance mechanisms, including with rights-holders and stakeholders.

#### Recognise indigenous and local knowledge

Recognising local people's knowledge, leadership and views is critical. While doing so is an increasingly recognised best practice, many natural resource-related decision-making processes continue to rely primarily on external scientific or economic knowledge systems, to the exclusion of the leadership and knowledge systems of the diverse rights-holders in a landscape. SUSTAIN and other actors should strengthen the co-generation of solutions with rights-holders, including by recognising their knowledge, cultural and governance systems. In addition to being part of a rights-based approach, doing so can offer new solutions and enhance inclusion.

#### Secure land and resource tenure, including via improved processes for VLUPs and CCRO issuance

SUSTAIN and other actors can support equitable implementation of the various policy options for securing individual and collective tenure on village land (and seek ways to address the limitations in other land categories). VLUPs can be strengthened with respect to, *inter alia*, their adaptability, enforcement and integration across the landscape. Likewise, CCRO issuance should be equitable and transparent, with collective certificates where appropriate. Accountable, fair and skilled facilitation is critical, including with respect to district official and NGO staff involvement.

#### Support and strengthen community-based natural resource governance

SUSTAIN and other actors can support communities in implementing the CBNRM options that those communities want to pursue, including based on full information about different options and their relative benefits and limitations. In all cases, such initiatives should be governed and implemented in ways that enable the greatest possible community empowerment and benefit.

#### **Conclusion**

The SUSTAIN programme made significant contributions to enhancing the foundation for effective and equitable natural resource governance in the Tanzania landscapes. Improved governance, in turn, can enable inclusion of disadvantaged and marginalised groups in shaping and benefiting from the sustainable development catalysed by SAGCOT. At the same time, there are many opportunities within SUSTAIN, and more broadly, to enhance these efforts, including through the considerations and recommendations above. SUSTAIN and other actors can integrate these recommendations going forward as part of broader efforts towards effective and equitable natural resource governance in the landscapes where they work.



#### **SUSTAINABILITY AND INCLUSION STRATEGY FOR GROWTH CORRIDORS IN AFRICA**

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