



Tropentag, September 18-20, 2019, Kassel

“Filling gaps and removing traps  
for sustainable resource management”

## Participatory Forest Management in West Usambara-Tanzania. What Is the Community Perception on Success?

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### Abstract

The community participation in the participatory programs has been the mainstay approach in the management of forest in resource rich but less developed countries. The approach empowers the communities living around the forest to benefit and take part in the resource management. Tanzania is among the countries often cited as a success in the participatory program. Despite the increase in forest areas and villages under the participatory programme in Tanzania over the last two decades, considered as a success by policy makers', there is little insight into the communities' views regarding their participation in the forest activities. The communities are important stakeholders in the sustainability of forest management and their perceptions provide the realistic performance and success of the participatory program. Therefore, this study aimed at exploring the extent of the communities participation in the goals identified under the participatory programs in Tanzania. The survey was conducted in 159 households, randomly sampled from four villages bordering state and community forests, in West Usambara Mountains. Factor analysis was used from which three participation components, namely economic, decision making, and protection, were summarised. The participation components were then used to formulate the participation index which gauged overall participation intensity. Further, based on focal group discussion and pictorial presentation, the pebble distribution method was used to rank the community perception on the benefits and management activities related to the forest. The study observed significantly higher levels and intensity of participation in the villages around the state compared to those around the community forest. Training attendance, trust on institutions and location were significant predictors of participation intensity of the households. In conclusion, the perceived performance of the participatory programs in achieving the participation aims has only been moderate, with a better situation in the state-managed forest. Raising awareness and improving communication with villagers, fulfilling promises for the communities and provide more forest linked benefits are interventions which can improve the situation in West Usambara. This study implies the importance of considering the community views as important stakeholders in formulating participatory policy which consider community interest and the resource sustainability.

**Keywords:** Community participation, Lushoto, participatory forest management, Usambara Mountains