



# POLICY BRIEF

## Monitoring village forest governance with the MJUMITA dashboard tool

### What is the MJUMITA Village Forest Governance Dashboard Tool?

The village dashboard tool is a process designed to assist villages engaging in participatory forest management (PFM) to adopt best practices in relation to village forest governance. The tool helps communities to identify obstacles to good governance and to establish practical, action plans to overcome those obstacles. Comparative analyses of data from multiple villages also provide insights into broader trends in village forest governance in Tanzania. The

tool was designed by MJUMITA, the Community Forest Conservation Network of Tanzania as part of the Forest Justice in Tanzania initiative. The tool relies on strong, independent, voluntary community forums or networks, operating alongside the formal village forest governance authorities. The community forums can link the process with other authorities and stakeholders, at village, ward, district and national level, to call for improvements.

### What does the tool assess?

The tool helps communities to assess forest governance in their village relative to best practice. The tool looks at accountability, transparency and participation of communities in village forest governance. It also assesses the relationship between villages and district, regional and national authorities. The tool is designed to assess governance in the context of participatory forest management, both community-based forest management and joint forest management. Having assessed the status of governance in a village, the tool provides a framework for communities to plan for improved governance.



### *The Forest Justice in Tanzania Initiative*

Forest Justice in Tanzania (FJT) is a four year project (2011-2014) that aims to promote improved governance and increased accountability in Tanzania's forest sector.

The initiative is a partnership between the Community Forest Conservation Network of Tanzania, known as MJUMITA and the Tanzania Forest Conservation Group (TFCG).

The project is working through four inter-related strategies, which are:

1. Monitoring forest governance and forest condition;
2. Enforcement promotion;
3. Research, analysis and communication; and
4. Agreeing standards.

The project is financed by DfID through the Accountability in Tanzania programme (ACT)

<http://www.tfcg.org/forestJusticeTanzania.html>

# How does the MJUMITA Village Forest Governance Dashboard tool work?

**Step 1:** Two community members who are not members of the Village Council or Village Natural Resources Committee are elected as Focus Group Leaders (FGLs) by their MJUMITA network. The FGLs should be active MJUMITA members. They should know how to read and write.

**Step 2:** MJUMITA provides training to the FGLs on how to collect dashboard data.

**Step 3:** The FGLs collect the dashboard data through interviews with the Village Executive Officer, Village Chairperson and Village Natural Resources Committee Chairperson and Secretary. The FGLs also verify the availability of important village records. The FGLs then conduct a focus group discussion with at least ten people who are not members of the Village Council or Village Natural Resources Committee.

**Step 4:** The FGLs then return the questionnaires to the MJUMITA Zonal Coordinators who analyse the results and prepare village reports comparing each village's governance status with best practice.

**Step 5:** The village-specific results are presented to the MJUMITA local network meetings as a forum for planning action to address any identified governance shortfalls.

**Step 6:** MJUMITA provides training to the FGLs on how to return the dashboard results to their village.

**Step 7:** FGLs return the dashboard results to their village. Results are presented to the Village Councils

and Village Natural Resources Committees including the comparison of the current status with best practice. The FGLs guide the Village Councils and Village Natural Resources Committees to discuss the governance shortfalls including the underlying reasons for those shortfalls; the barriers to overcoming the shortfalls; and strategies and actions to improve forest governance.

**Step 8:** FGLs present the dashboard results to their respective Village Assembly, together with the findings from the meeting with the village leaders described in Step 7. During the village assembly meeting, the community members agree on the solutions and action plans to be taken independently by their village in order to improve village forest governance. The FGLs guide the participants to be as specific as possible in developing action plans such as setting dates for meetings, patrols, revision of by-laws and publication of village reports on public notice boards.

**Step 9:** MJUMITA members and Zonal Coordinators share the process and results with stakeholders including journalists, in order to inspire as many communities as possible to take action on forest governance. During MJUMITA network meetings, FGLs and other community members are encouraged to share their experiences and to challenge each other to take action to improve governance. Ward and District leaders are invited to participate as are village leaders. The governance results and success stories from different villages are also shared at district and national level through district and national forums, newsletters and mass media.

**Step 11:** Network members and communities at large monitor the implementation of the agreed strategies through: village Assembly meetings, visits to village offices and village notice boards. Community members are encouraged to hold their leaders accountable particularly during village assembly meetings and MJUMITA network meetings.

**Step 12:** Monitoring is repeated after 12 – 14 months (or when funds allow) in order to assess change in forest governance and to assist villages to review and improve their strategies.



# Where did the Forest Justice in Tanzania initiative implement the village dashboard tool?

The village dashboard tool was applied in 327 villages in 30 districts and 13 regions and involving 97 MJUMITA networks. Monitoring was carried out twice, once in 2011 and again in 2013 thereby allowing for a comparative analysis to assess change over the two years.

## What were the results of the village dashboard?

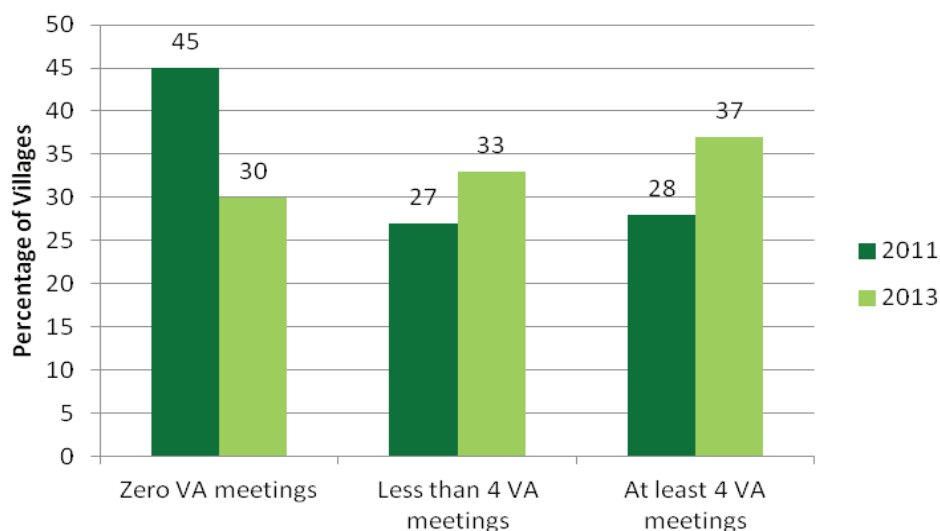
Overall the dashboard found that many villages are not implementing some of the actions required to provide a governance framework for participatory forest management such as village assembly meetings; village natural resources committee meetings and patrols. There was an overall positive trend between 2011 and 2013 in the governance indicators used by the dashboard. A selection of the results is presented

below. A detailed description of the results is available at: <http://www.tfcg.org/forestJusticeTanzania.html>

## Number of village assembly meetings held per year

Village assembly meetings are a cornerstone for village governance as they provide the forum for the community as a whole to receive reports from the village council; to discuss those reports; and to agree on key decisions affecting the whole village. Between 2011 and 2013, the number of villages holding at least one village assembly meeting increased from 55 % to 70 % with the mean frequency of village assembly meetings increasing from 2.21 to 2.63. Participation in those meetings also increased with the mean attendance level increasing from 155 participants to 163 participants per meeting.

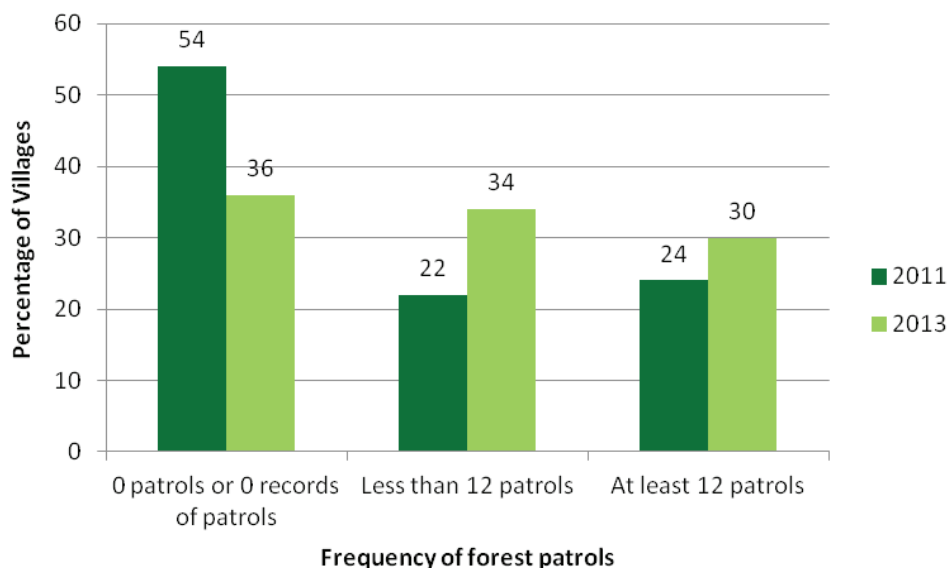
**Figure 1.** Change in the percentage of villages holding 0, < 4 or ≥ 4 village assembly meetings between 2011 and 2013.



## Number of patrols carried out per year

In the context of participatory forest management, forest patrols are one of the basic forest management activities. Between 2011 and 2013, the number of villages conducting at least one patrol per year increased from 46 % to 64 % whilst the number of villages keeping records increased by 16 %.

**Figure 2.** Change in the percentage of villages conducting 0, < 12 or ≥ 12 village assembly meetings between 2011 and 2013.



# Has the village dashboard tool contributed to improved governance in the participating villages?

For most indicators assessed with the village dashboard tool, there was an increase in the percentage of villages adopting best practices. The general trend was of villages increasing the frequency of activities fundamental to village governance. Some of the trends in governance are elaborated below:

**Improved accountability at village level:** In addition to the increase in the frequency of village assembly meetings, FGLs reported accounts of village assemblies becoming more effective in implementing their oversight role. For example, Nyaminywili and Umwe Kati Villages in Rufiji District; Kiangara and Likombora villages in Liwale District; and Kinjumbi Village in Kilwa District all dissolved their Village Councils as a result of governance shortfalls indicated by the village dashboard results; and elected new members.

**More democratic decision-making:** The results of the 2011 survey showed that in some villages, the village natural resources committee (VNRC) members had been appointed by the Village Councils instead of being elected by the village general assembly. Responding to this, many villages took action to

reform their VNRCs with the view of improving their operations.

**Improvement of village social services:** The improvement of the forest management practices and good governance in the villages helped some villages to generate revenue that was invested in improving social services.

- In 2012, Muyuyu Village in Rufiji district made 50 school desks by using fines and confiscated timber that had been harvested illegally from their village.
- Umwe Kati Village in Rufiji District collected over TZS 1.6m from fines and from the sale of confiscated forest products in 2013.
- Kibutuka Village in Liwale district raised TZS 3,625,000 after selling 250 pieces of timber confiscated during patrols and spent the money in constructing school toilets currently used by over 500 students.
- Mtungunyu and Mahonga Village in Liwale confiscated timber worth TZS 5.5 and TZS 1.5 Million respectively. They invested these funds in the construction of village offices.



Village dashboard results are shared during the MUMIKAMA network meeting at Kiwawa Village in March 2013.

## Find out more

The information presented here is from the report:

Albert, A. 2014. [Monitoring changes in forest governance at village level in Tanzania between 2011 and 2013](#). MJUMITA and TFCG pp. 1-60. pdf 967 kb

The report can be downloaded from <http://www.tfcg.org/forestJusticeTanzania.html>

The Forest Justice in Tanzania project also carried out governance monitoring at District level.

Results of these surveys are described in:

Aklei, A. and E. Monga 2014. [Are district officials playing their part in providing forest justice in Tanzania? A report on a survey of forest governance at District level](#). Forest Justice in Tanzania Technical Report.

## For more information about the Forest Justice in Tanzania project partners:

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