SULEDO FOREST COMMUNITY
Tanzania

Equator Initiative Case Studies
Local sustainable development solutions for people, nature, and resilient communities
Local and indigenous communities across the world are advancing innovative sustainable development solutions that work for people and for nature. Few publications or case studies tell the full story of how such initiatives evolve, the breadth of their impacts, or how they change over time. Fewer still have undertaken to tell these stories with community practitioners themselves guiding the narrative.

To mark its 10-year anniversary, the Equator Initiative aims to fill this gap. The following case study is one in a growing series that details the work of Equator Prize winners – vetted and peer-reviewed best practices in community-based environmental conservation and sustainable livelihoods. These cases are intended to inspire the policy dialogue needed to take local success to scale, to improve the global knowledge base on local environment and development solutions, and to serve as models for replication. Case studies are best viewed and understood with reference to 'The Power of Local Action: Lessons from 10 Years of the Equator Prize', a compendium of lessons learned and policy guidance that draws from the case material.

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PROJECT SUMMARY

In 1993, the Government of Tanzania designated the Suledo Forest as a Central Government Forest Reserve, in an attempt to stem the overexploitation of forest resources in this 167,400-ha stretch of *miombo* woodland. This move, made without prior local consultation, resulted in the disenfranchisement of nine neighbouring forest-dependent Maasai villages.

These communities resisted the new arrangement, prompting the government to begin a process of devolution of forest use rights to the local level through Village Environmental Committees, where local communities were transferred responsibilities for formulating forest management plans and crafting by-laws to enforce them. Eventually, Suledo Forest was granted the legal status of a Village Land Forest Reserve, formally establishing local management authority, and allowing for the sustainable commercial harvesting of forest resources for the benefit of the Maasai.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Background and Context</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Key Activities and Innovations</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Biodiversity Impacts</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Socioeconomic Impacts</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Policy Impacts</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sustainability</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Replication</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partners</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

KEY FACTS

- **EQUATOR PRIZE WINNER:** 2002
- **FOUNDED:** Mid-1990s
- **LOCATION:** Kiteto District, Manyara
- **BENEFICIARIES:** 54,000 people in nine rural villages
- **BIODIVERSITY:** 167,400 ha community-managed forest
The Suledo Forest Community is made up of nine rural villages (Laiseri, Olkitikiti, Loltpesi, Muturu, Asamatwa, Olgira, Sunya, Lesoit and Lengatei), home to a total population of approximately 54,000 people. These villages are located in the southeastern corner of Kiteto District in the Manyara Region of the United Republic of Tanzania.

The nine villages that make up the Suledo Forest Community are relatively large, ranging in size from 8,700 ha to over 52,000 ha, with an average size of 30,000 ha. Each village is made up of between five and eight sub-villages.

Within the official borders of these nine registered villages lies the Suledo Forest – 167,400 ha of species-rich miombo woodland, deriving its name from its location within the three wards of Sunya, Lengatei and Dongo. Miombo, the Swahili word for *Brachystegia*, a genus of tree comprising a large number of species, makes up the major vegetation type of the Suledo Forest, along with mixed *Acacia* and *Combretum* species, thickets, and dry montane forest. The forest also contains valuable ebony (*Dalbergia melanoxylon*) and African teak (*Pterocarpus angolensis*) species. Suledo Forest was traditionally used for grazing by indigenous, nomadic Maasai tribes, and during the colonial administration, the area was administered as a Maasai District, with no land uses other than grazing permitted, giving the Maasai almost complete control over the forest.

By the early 1990s, however, the gradual immigration of other tribes to the area resulted in greater diversity of ethnicities, and led to competition for resources from other land uses. Extensive logging operations targeted and removed large timber trees and most of the valuable tree species in the forest were removed. Areas of forest were cleared for agriculture, much of it on a commercial scale, severely disrupting traditional grazing patterns, not only by reducing the area available for grazing, but also by cutting off cattle tracks and obstructing access to water sources. The impacts of these activities were compounded by corruption and a lack of transparency and accountability on the part of local forestry officials. Even when trees were removed legally, only 20 per cent of the revenue was returned to the district, and only four per cent went on to reach the village level.

The situation came to a head in 1993, when concerns over the unsustainable exploitation of the forest led regional government forestry offices to declare the forest a Central Government Forest Reserve. No survey of socioeconomic conditions was carried out, however, and, despite the presence of established villages, cultivated fields, and settlements inside the planned reserve, no consultations were held with the local people. Regulations were imposed that would have made grazing illegal, cutting off the local Maasai population from their traditional livelihood. Rather than protect the forest from further degradation, this action disproportionately threatened the local Maasai community’s wellbeing. The forest administration nonetheless proceeded with the demarcation, in an attempt to meet ambitious targets set out in the 1989 Tropical Forestry Action Plan (TFAP) to increase the area of forest reserves in the country.

The demarcation triggered an immediate response from the residents of the adjoining villages, who argued that sustainable management of the forest should be devolved to the villages. This was supported by a socioeconomic study carried out in 1994 that recommended community-based forest management. The government capitulated and in 1995, a process was begun to develop a framework for the devolution of forest management to the villages. Officially approved in June 1995, village-based management of the Suledo Forest was implemented in collaboration with the Kiteto District Council and District Forest Officers, who were responsible for the implementation of land use regulations. Initially implemented under the Arusha Region's Regional Forestry Programme, the project was subsequently incorporated into Tanzania’s Land Management Programme (LAMP).

By 1997, the Suledo Forest was under the management of the Suledo Forest Community – which operates as a network of autonomous community-based organizations, representing the interests of each of the nine villages. The Community receives funding and support from the Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA) via the LAMP District Advisor, which is funded by SIDA and operated through Orgut Consulting, a Swedish for-profit firm.
**Governing community-based forest management**

The process of initiating community-based forest management began with the formation of Village Environmental Committees in each of the nine villages, as well as lesser committees in each sub-village. Each Village Environment Committee was represented on an overarching Zonal Environmental Committee (the zone being the entirety of the Suledo Village Land Forest Reserve). Committees were both gender and ethnically balanced, representing all of the relevant village stakeholders, and were determined by regular elections. The committees met regularly and had well-defined roles and duties, including detailed terms of reference for the roles of Chairman, Secretary and Treasurer.

The purpose of the committees was to improve the socioeconomic situation of the Suledo communities and to reduce poverty by improving natural resource management through the introduction of equitable and sustainable use practices, especially with regard to grazing, agriculture, and other livelihood activities such as beekeeping and the harvesting of non-timber forest products. Facilitated by a participatory land-use planning exercise, each village divided their land into management zones and established simple rules for its use. Committees established patrolling systems to ensure compliance. These forest patrols engaged many young adults of the Maasai and other tribes, during the traditional ‘warrior’ stage.

Local knowledge and institutions formed the basis for these management plans and the rules gained legal status as they were formulated and passed by the respective village assemblies and incorporated into village by-laws. The forest was given the status of a Village Land Forest Reserve in 2007, a category designated by Tanzania’s 2002 Forest Act which has paved the way for village-based forest management in Tanzania on a wider scale.

The villages of the Suledo Forest Community collectively manage their forest through the overarching Zonal Environmental Committee (ZEC) which draws its membership from the Village Environmental Committees of each of the nine villages. The ZEC consists of twenty-seven members (three from each Village Environmental Committee) and is led by a Secretary. The role of the ZEC is to oversee issues that are common to all of the villages, such as boundary disputes between villages or the absence of clearly marked borders with neighboring districts.

After the Suledo Forest was designated as a Village Land Forest Reserve in 2007, a legal agreement between the villages and the ZEC (as the managing committee of the forest), allowed the ZEC to enter into harvesting contracts for timber and other forest products, and to defray the costs of managing the Suledo Forest by collecting part of the revenue from fees charged and licenses issued. A portion of any revenue was to be distributed equally between the nine Village Environmental Committees. In 2009, the Suledo Forest Community began a tendering process to begin selective harvesting of trees from the forest, and entered into an agreement with a company to proceed with this work. After repeated delays, selective harvesting was due to begin on a 500 ha plot of forest in 2010.
Each of the nine villages in the Suledo Forest Community is demarcated into two main areas: a settlement area and a forest area. The settlement area is home to habitations and is also used for small-scale agriculture and the collection of non-timber forest products. The combined forest areas make up the legal Village Land Forest Reserve, totaling 167,416 ha. No settlements are allowed within this area, which is divided into three main zones: 80 per cent is designated for grazing, five per cent for agricultural expansion, and 15 per cent as fully protected forest.

Grazing is permitted in practice within both the grazing and agricultural expansion areas, and is allowed within the forest areas during times of drought if approved by the village-level environmental management committees, reflecting the fact that grazing is still the predominant livelihood activity in the Maasai villages. It should be noted, however, that most Maasai have begun to engage in some small-scale agriculture in recent years.

**Land use regulations**

The borders of the grazing, agricultural expansion and forest zones are marked on trees and stones with yellow paint to make them highly visible. They have also been mapped by the villagers. Based on the zoning of the forest and the current condition of the resources within each area, a set of simple forest use rules has been established by each village. The rules stipulate whether the zones are prohibited from use, freely available for use, available for use with a free permit issued by the Village Environmental Committee or available for use with a permit and on payment of a fee. Collection of forest products from within the Village Land Forest Reserve, for example, requires a permit, while a fee must be paid if this is done for commercial purposes.

Regulations surrounding grazing are based on traditional pastoralist practices of Kiteto District, which relies on a grazing system that covers large areas of land and does not observe administrative boundaries. Grazing regulations are flexible, and change depending on the availability and location of water and grass at any time. Sharing grazing areas and allowing free movement of cattle are necessary if animals are to survive periods of severe drought. Village by-laws are structured around these customary practices, ensuring the availability of a large grazing area. Violations of grazing rules are punished with a heavy fine - usually a mature bull which is slaughtered and shared by the community members.

In cases of illegal logging, the ZEC may confiscate timber as evidence, notify the police, and take the suspected loggers to court. If the community wins its case, they may sell the timber and take ownership of any vehicles or equipment confiscated from illegal operators.

**Forest Patrols**

The regulations are enforced by patrols, which typically consist of young men from the village. Patrol members are equipped with identity cards and currently operate in all nine villages. This work is unpaid, however, and reliant on volunteers who are exempted from other roles as compensation for their patrol work. Nevertheless, maintaining sufficient interest in patrolling the forest proved a challenge. Patrols focus on areas of the forest that are most frequently targeted by loggers and poachers, and also rely on observations made by pastoralist Maasai. While the project was initially effective in ensuring compliance with the newly-established by-laws, illegal settlements began to appear within the forest’s grazing areas as the necessary commitment to patrolling and regulating the forest areas waned.
The community has sought the support of the Kiteto District Council to deal with bigger intrusions, especially in the case of extensive forest exploitation or large-scale clearance for agriculture. Similarly, the support of the District Court in Kijungu has been necessary to administer punishments for culprits. Continued support from these local institutions is necessary for the sustained success of the Suledo Forest project.

**Selective Harvesting**

Although the Suledo Forest Community generates some income through the issuance of permits and fines, the most promising prospective source of income for the community is through the selective logging of valuable hardwood species from the forest. As the Suledo Forest has been under the protection of the community since the mid-1990s, it is in relatively good condition and has the potential to generate substantial income for the local communities if sustainably harvested. The sustainable harvesting of trees would also provide a strong incentive for the continued protection of the forest. Plans to produce charcoal from the remnants of harvested trees also represent a potential source of income generation and employment from the forest. However, because this trade is unregulated it has proven controversial, and an overall plan as to how to proceed has yet to be established.

Socioeconomic benefits from commercial harvesting of resources have been hampered by governance issues. Suledo Forest has been one of few Tanzanian community-based forest management projects to attempt to incorporate sustainable timber harvesting into its conservation work. This is due to the high economic potential of timber harvesting for the Suledo Forest Community. According to a study conducted in 2010, potential annual revenue from timber in Suledo is USD 213,000 (USD 23,700 per village). After years of careful management of forest resources, in 2007 the decision was taken to pilot timber harvesting within the area. The management plan was revised to include this project and was submitted to the Tanzanian Forest and Beekeeping Division (FBD).

The Suledo forest has a generation time of 60 years, or 80 in the case of African Blackwood trees (Dalbergia melanoxylon). After much discussion between villages, Sunya village’s 10,000 ha forest was chosen as a pilot plot for timber-harvesting. With a 60-year rotational system, the size of each cut was set at 167 ha. The first plot was selected, and trees above 40 cm diameter at breast height were marked for harvesting. Several larger, healthy trees were left standing as a gene pool for future regeneration. Funding for this pilot timber harvesting was provided by the ZEC, while the Kiteto District Forest Office supported the technical work in demarcating the trees for felling. Initial estimates in 2007 of the volume of timber and income resulting from this cutting suggested that this would not be economically viable, however, making it necessary to demarcate an additional cutting from an adjacent village’s forest area. A contract with a harvesting company was eventually signed in December 2009, although delays to the process meant that by the end of 2010, harvesting had still not begun.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Botanical Name</th>
<th>Family</th>
<th>Common Name</th>
<th>Local Name</th>
<th>Common Uses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>Pterocarpus angolensis</em></td>
<td>Fabaceae</td>
<td>Transvaal teak</td>
<td>Mninga</td>
<td>Timber (construction, furniture) and medicine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Brachystegia spiciformis</em></td>
<td>Fabaceae</td>
<td>Zebrwood, Msasa</td>
<td>Mkalakala</td>
<td>Timber (furniture, railway sleepers), fodder, apiculture, firewood and charcoal, fibre (rope for roof ties, sacks, cloth, corn bins, beehives), tannin or dyestuff, medicinal (roots)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Brachystegia microphylla</em></td>
<td>Fabaceae</td>
<td>Miombo (generic)</td>
<td>Msane</td>
<td>Timber, fodder, apiculture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Albizia versicolor</em></td>
<td>Fabaceae</td>
<td>Large-leaved false thorn</td>
<td>Mkingu</td>
<td>Timber (furniture, cabinets, parquet floors), fodder, apiculture, tannin or dyestuff, medicine (root bark), boiled roots are a soap substitute</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Dalbergia melanoxylon</em></td>
<td>Fabac cae</td>
<td>African blackwood, African ebony</td>
<td>Mpingo</td>
<td>Carving, animal fodder, apiculture, firewood, medicinal (roots and smoke)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Julbernadia globiflora</em></td>
<td>Fabaceae</td>
<td></td>
<td>Mhangala</td>
<td>Timber (heavy construction, mining timbers, railroad crossties), firewood and charcoal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Grewia bicolor</em></td>
<td>Tiliaceae</td>
<td>Bastard brandy bush</td>
<td>Mkole</td>
<td>Timber walking sticks and canes, tool handles, weapons, hut frames and nomadic tent posts, fruits (edible and fermentable), muclaginous leaves (used as binding agents for sauces), fibre (cordage), fodder (favoured by sheep and goats), firewood, medicinal (leaves, root, wood and bark), leaves used as a soap substitute</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Combretum molle</em></td>
<td>Combretaceae</td>
<td>Velvet bush willow</td>
<td>Mlamamweusi</td>
<td>Timber (handles, poles, stools, construction and fence posts), cattle fodder, apiculture, firewood and charcoal, tannin or dyestuff, medicinal (roots, leaves, gum)</td>
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Impacts

BIODIVERSITY IMPACTS

Natural resource inventories carried out for each of the nine villages in 1999-2000 identified 80 tree and shrub species, as well as an array of large mammals and reptiles typical of the savanna woodlands of Tanzania. These include primates such as the yellow baboon (P. cynocephalus) and vervet monkey (Chlorocebus pygerythrus), and other mammal species such as the scrub hare (Lepus saxatilis), bat-eared fox (Otocyon megalotis), African wild dog (Lycaon pictus), spotted hyena (Crocuta crocuta), greater and lesser kudu (Tragelaphus strepsiceros and Ammelaphus imberbis), gazelles, impala, and hartebeest, as well as leopards, lions, zebra, and many other species.

Despite the inevitable challenges faced by the Suledo Forest Community, including slow progress with capacity building and empowerment training, the need to put new systems for forest governance in place, and changes in government policies and leadership, significant levels of forest recovery are visible since the community took responsibility for its management. Forest cover and regrowth within the 167,000 ha of managed forest reserve have improved, and there is now better pasture available for grazing. Populations of elephants and elands have increased since the Suledo Forest Reserve was established, thanks to a reduction in poaching within the area.

This represents a substantial feat, and validates the model of community-led forest management that Suledo has helped to pioneer in Tanzania. The transition from the forest as an open access resource to the forest as an area under planned management has allowed these positive impacts to occur, primarily by limiting exploitation of the forest by outside groups for commercial purposes. While it has been argued that forest grazing can limit forest growth and harm regeneration, the results of the rotational management system employed in the Suledo Forest have had a substantially lower impact on the ecosystem than large-scale logging or clearance for agriculture that was previously occurring.

Limits on harvesting forest resources have allowed endangered tree species such as sandalwood (Santalum album) and Pterocarpus to recover. Sustainable, commercial harvesting of trees for timber, firewood, and charcoal has been carefully explored in recent years and is now beginning to be undertaken.

SOCIOECONOMIC IMPACTS

In line with the initial aims of the Suledo Forest’s pastoralist communities, the forest management plan has allowed extensive grazing of cattle. With 80 per cent of the forest area set aside for grazing, and procedures for additional land to be made available in cases of extreme drought, the forest has supported the grazing of 40,000 cattle. This is the principal livelihood activity of the Maasai people, bringing them economic gains as well as preserving their traditional culture.

Under the government’s 1993 plan for the forest, the Maasai would have been entirely prohibited from grazing their livestock within the forest. The maintenance of grazing rights is therefore an important victory for the initiative. Combined with allowing areas of forest for small-scale agricultural expansion, this has brought important nutritional and financial gains to the Suledo communities. Milk production has increased from 1 liter to 1.5 liters daily per cow, while farming communities have managed to increase crop production on average from 15 to 25 bags of maize per hectare. Villagers have cited better control of cattle diseases as a result of the increased grazing area, and the management plan has also reduced conflict between pastoralist and farming communities.

The forest also provides the local communities with other benefits that support basic livelihoods. The forest offers a particularly high potential for beekeeping, as it is rich in varieties of flowering plants and reliable water sources. Collection of fruits, nuts, medicinal plants and mushrooms is allowed under the Suledo Forest management plan, supporting villagers’ diets, wellbeing, and income.

The forest reserve is also the venue for several traditional initiation ceremonies for the Maasai and other local tribes. The increased local availability of timber for houses and community buildings has reduced household expenditure on commercially harvested timber. Through proper protection and management, the increased supply of water from natural sources has enabled villagers to establish tree nurseries, vegetable gardens and fruit orchards that contribute directly to improved livelihoods. Easier and more reliable access to water reduces the workload of family members, in particular women.

Training and capacity building activities have built the competence of the Suledo Forest Community to manage their own natural resources, and women in particular have gained from training and the opportunity to take part in the governance of the initiative. NGOs have provided training to equal quotas of men and women in financial management, legal issues, fund tracking, tender process and evaluation of bids, contracts, harvesting operations, charcoal making, monitoring and land rights.

In Maasai culture, women traditionally have little say in decision making processes. Committees formed for the management of the forest have challenged this tradition by ensuring the fair representation of women both on committees and in access to employment opportunities that the forest management initiative provides. Women and men were given equal opportunities for training and women are now, together with the men, working as book-keepers, monitors, forest guards, and in various roles in the tree harvesting process, receiving the same pay as men.
Revenue from timber

Revenue from sustainable tree harvesting and charcoal making promised to provide a sustainable source of income for the forest communities but this has been hampered to a degree by delays in getting harvesting underway, and disagreements regarding the division of revenue from timber and charcoal sales. According to a study conducted in 2010, potential annual revenue from timber in Suledo is USD 213,000 (USD 23,700 per village), a figure that would represent a substantial contribution to livelihoods if profits were shared between the villages and used for the ongoing management of the forest. To date, however, efforts to sustainably harvest trees have been delayed, although the first harvest has been undertaken, with villagers finding employment during this first round.

Efforts to sustainably harvest non-timber forest products, and especially firewood and charcoal, have also proved frustrating. The districts of Kiteto and Simanjirio supply charcoal to urban centers such as Moshi and Arusha. Much of the trade is unregulated and illegal, however, and has significant ecological impacts in both districts.

If Suledo villages were to produce charcoal from leftover branches from timber harvesting, which can account for up to 60 per cent of the total harvested volume, this would provide a vital second source of income for the Suledo villages, and could target more vulnerable sectors of the local population or women’s groups. It was estimated that the sale of charcoal could generate up to USD 30,000 annually. Because this trade is unregulated, however, it has proven controversial, and an overall plan as to how to proceed has yet to be established. This process has also been complicated by disagreements between the local District Forest Office and the Forestry and Bee-keeping Division over how the revenues from firewood and charcoal sales should be divided. The FBD has claimed that the revenues should accrue directly to the central government, which has been resisted at the local level.

POLICY IMPACTS

Although the Suledo Forest Community has had positive impacts on Tanzania’s national forestry policy, there has been a lack of adequate support for the project from both the local and national government levels. These have been related both to the policing of illicit activity within the forest reserve and to the distribution of revenues. Unfortunately, these governance issues have hampered the ability of the project to fully achieve its interlinked conservation and socioeconomic goals.

The implementation of community-based forest management has not been without problems. Illegal activities, including pit-sawing and poaching, continue to take place in the forest. At one stage, unregulated farms were opened up in the forest to such an extent that it was impossible for patrollers to control the situation. The by-laws have at times been used successfully to send offenders, including one sub-village chairperson and one schoolteacher, to jail. In many cases, however, the Village Environmental Committees have lacked the authority to punish transgressors effectively. In addition, proper reporting and documentation of incidents have been lacking, and there is still a lack of transparency as to the use of funds collected as fines from villagers. In all villages, without exception, forests and grazing areas are being lost to agriculture, often to outsiders supported by village leaders.

While these threats could be alleviated with adequate support from Kiteto District Council and the District Court in Kijungu, these local institutions have not always been able to respond effectively. Similarly, disagreements and a lack of transparency over the use of revenues from commercial sales of timber or other forest products have severely hampered attempts to develop sustainable harvesting as an alternative livelihood activity.

Nonetheless, recognition of the Suledo Forest project’s positive impacts, particularly in its early stages, has allowed it to inform government policies. The management of the forest by local communities in the early 1990s was made possible by existing land and government laws that enabled Suledo’s Zonal Environmental Committee to develop by-laws and enter into partnership with Kiteto District Council. At that stage, existing forest law did not allow communities to manage and own forests. By demonstrating positive impacts on the ground, the experiences of the Suledo forest (and others in central and northern Tanzania) were used to influence and inform the development of the Forest Policy (1998) which in turn fed into the formulation of the Forest Act (2002) which clearly recognizes the role played by rural communities in forest management and provides a legal basis for much of the participatory forest management work currently being implemented in Tanzania.

The Act is now one of the most progressive forest laws in Africa, providing village governments with the mandate to demarcate, register, own, manage and utilize forests on their own village lands for the purposes of sustainable forest management and local revenue generation. Over 1.8 million hectares of forests and woodlands are now under village ownership and management.

The Suledo initiative also received international recognition at the Second International Workshop on Participatory Forestry in Africa, arranged by the FAO and GTZ, in Arusha, February 2002. In the same year, the initiative was awarded the inaugural UNDP Equator Prize.
SUSTAINABILITY

Suledo Forest Community faces the challenges of financial, environmental, and social sustainability. Its continued existence as an administrative body since 1994 and its successes in conserving forest resources and benefitting local livelihoods during this time are indicators of a level of sustainability, although this is threatened by various factors. Financial sustainability has become a prescient challenge as the Swedish International Development Agency (Sida) has withdrawn its support of the project in recent years. This was planned over the long-term, with the objective of gradually making Suledo a self-sustaining initiative; however, new sources of funding have not yet been developed.

One principal means of supporting the project’s operational costs would have been sustainable timber harvesting, which would have allowed profits to be reinvested in the management initiative. The slow progress of negotiations for harvesting has prevented this from being developed as a viable source of financing. One possibility explored has been to pursue Forest Stewardship Council certification for the forest’s harvested timber. This would open up high-value markets for the community, as well as entailing a source of external management support, but the process is very costly and is not likely to be embarked upon unless a partner can be identified to invest in the process.

An alternative strategy for boosting long-term financial sustainability is opening the area to ecotourism, or to commercial game hunting. Any agreements with tourism operators would require extensive discussions between the villages, and the community is wary of the likely problems associated with sharing revenues from ecotourism. The prospect of raising funds to maintain the forest through REDD payments for carbon sequestration has been mentioned, but since one aim of Tanzania’s national REDD strategy is to help people to diversify into income generating activities that do not include forest use, grazing would likely not be allowed in a REDD-managed forest.

As mentioned previously, there continue to be many threats to the forest’s resources from ‘land grabs’ for agriculture. These ongoing environmental threats pose a challenge to the initiative’s ongoing success. Simultaneously, the improvements that have been seen in terms of biodiversity can in turn pose social problems. Where wildlife numbers have increased, this can lead to costs in the form of crop damage. Human-wildlife conflict is exacerbated by the lack of clear laws relating to management of the wildlife of Suledo Forest, and the proximity of human settlements to healthy populations of various wildlife species. This situation needs to be addressed to prevent these issues undermining social support for the project.

There have certainly been some positive social outcomes that may bode well for the communities’ future prospects of successfully managing the Suledo forest. Capacity-building training has strengthened community members’ competence in forest management and their knowledge of their legal rights. However, the situation is still precarious and the possibility remains that the villagers’ experience in harvesting operations and the handling of funds may be too limited to have securely taken root on the community level.

PARTNERS

Village-based management of the Suledo Forest was implemented in collaboration with the Kiteto District Council and District Forest Officers. Initially implemented under the Arusha Region’s Regional Forestry Programme, the project was subsequently incorporated into Tanzania’s Land Management Programme (LAMP). Via the LAMP District Advisor, the Suledo Forest Community receives support and funding from the Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA) which funds the LAMP programme and operates it through Orgut Consulting, a Swedish for-profit firm specializing in management support for long-term multi-disciplinary rural development programmes. The Suledo Forest Community continues to work closely with local government agencies, such as Kiteto District Council, and the Tanzanian Forestry and Beekeeping Division.
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- Suledo Forest Community video (Vimeo) [https://vimeo.com/27016728](https://vimeo.com/27016728)

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