



TANZANIA: ENGAGING COMMUNITIES IN FOREST PROTECTION

Ms. Rahima Njaidi is the Executive Director of The Community Forest Network of Tanzania (MJUMITA), an organization of approximately 500 community forest groups in 420 Tanzanian villages. Rahima is dedicated to ensuring that innovative forestry initiatives in the region benefit not only the climate but communities as well.

MJUMITA's 6,000 individual members are mostly small farmers or beekeepers and other forest users living close to government-owned Tanzanian forests. Since 2009 and with support through Southern Voices, MJUMITA has engaged its members through training workshops and community radio about the impacts of climate change. Known as a powerful network on the ground, MJUMITA plays a central role in Tanzania's policy of Participatory Forest Management (PFM).



"The key task for MJUMITA is to act as an advocacy platform for the communities living near the forest, on issues like forest management and governance", says Rahima.

One mechanism of Participatory Forest Management where MJUMITA plays a large role is through Joint Forest Management (JFM) practices. Through JFM, communities are asked to help protect government owned forests from illegal logging and other illegal activities. In return for patrolling and protecting the forest and acting as forest guards, communities receive 40% of the income from the sale of forest products.

"But that is not happening, so communities have actually been protecting the forest for nothing, as volunteers. Now that 'REDD' mechanisms - or ways to fight climate change by reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation - are being introduced in Tanzania, MJUMITA must ensure that the forest users are involved", explains Rahima.

REDD mechanisms have been introduced in the country as a set of steps designed to use market or financial incentives to reduce the emissions of greenhouse gases from deforestation and forest degradation.

"The key objective in our advocacy is to ensure that forest communities receive a fair share of the benefits from the forests", says Rahima. "We are asking for representation on the national task force on REDD."

In addition to advocacy at a national level, MJUMITA has also been engaged in promoting REDD through international climate negotiations.

"We have joined forces with likeminded organizations in the Accra Caucus", explained Rahima. "The Accra Caucus is a loose network of Southern and Northern NGOs working on forest issues and REDD in the climate negotiations. It is important that REDD rules will commit governments and other actors to respect the rights of the people living off the forest", says Rahima.

For more information about Rahmia's story visit: <http://climatecapacity.org/news/newsletter/55>