

## Participation by Marginalisation: Women in Community-based Forest Management in Kilwa District, Tanzania

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### Abstract

*This paper highlights ways in which marginalisation of women in forest management participation is happening within community-based forest certification programmes. Drawing from interviews, focus group discussions and observation with men and women in Kilwa District, the paper examines how women are excluded from participating in forest-related activities and in leadership positions. It reveals discourses which institutionalise marginalisation and shows how these discourses have re-produced culture, distance and time as the main constraints to women's participation in forest management. The paper's main contribution is to show how the factors which lead to women's exclusion are woven and become normalized in everyday discourses and continue to exclude women. We show how the institutionalisation of women exclusion from forest marginalisation happens even in the very programmes which claim to bring equal participation of men and women.*

**Keywords:** forest certification; community-based forest management; gender; women; participation; social justice

### Introduction

The last two decades have witnessed a paradigm shift in the conservation and management of natural resources away from top-down state-centred approach. This approach advocates a more participatory community based natural resources management is assumed to be promoting gender balance (Ochola *et al.*, 2010; Edmunds *et al.*, 2004; Shackleton *et al.*, 2002; Kellert *et al.*, 2000). Mainstreaming of gender equality is only done at the project

level, while at the community and household levels, discriminative discourses have worked to prevent women from effective participation. While community based natural resource management is viewed as inclusive, our paper shows that they have created “men’s and women’s work”, in this new industry of forest certification and have added to another layer of marginalisation besides the community wide patriarchal system. In fact, the way the forest certification is functioning in this part of Tanzania is not different from women in the “factory daughters”<sup>31</sup> (Ong, 1991) or the *maquiladora* leading to double marginalisation of women first at home and then in the CBFM forest management.

It is somehow expected in the Global South, and in particular the Muslim culture for a woman to behave in a certain way in relation to men. Our argument is how these forms of marginalisation are woven through discourses which reproduce culture, time and space as hindrances to only women’s and not to men’s participation in the CBFM. On the contrary, narratives from women also show that they are opposing some of those cultural barriers which have worked overtime to exclude them from equal gains as men. Even though the introduction of forest certification has a good intention of involving and empowering the community, it has not gone to the level of ensuring equal gender participation. We are arguing that this raises an important social justice issue to be included in the consideration for sustainable timber production and forest certification business. The gender division of labour in the CBFM as we argue, constructs men as collectors of timber and wood forest products, wild meat, honey, building materials and bamboo poles which have more value, and are largely used for commercial purposes, while women as collectors of firewood, wild foods, and non-timber forest products (NTFPs) that are mostly used for household consumption, are less valuable.

CBNRM programmes is based on the premise that local communities have equal chances, hence equal participation in managing resources (Ochola *et al.*, 2020; Tsing *et al.*, 1998), and that women’s participation is important as it ensures them training, decision making and income from their full participation in CBFM activities. The promotion of women’s participation in CBNRM has been considered instrumental for ensuring sustainable management and maintenance of natural resources as well as the success of CBNRM programmes (Gurung and Setyowati, 2012; Douma *et al.*, 2002; Sarin, 2001). Many governments of developing world and international

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<sup>31</sup> How women workers who most of them are young and find that they also experience the patriarchal system at work.

agencies and organisations have emphasized on the importance of equal participation and the roles of men and women in natural resource management programmes (Ochola et al., 2010; Resurrection and Elmhirst, 2008; FAO, 2007). We examine the chance of women participation and factors which hinder their effective participation.

Studies have linked gendered participation and sustainability showing the importance of integrating gender issues and promoting gender equality in participation in natural resource management (NRM) projects (Meinzen-Dick *et al.*, 2014; Aguilar *et al.*, 2011; Ochola *et al.*, 2010; Agarwal, 2009, 2010; Resurreccion and Elmhirst, 2008). These studies have shown that equal participation of both men and women in all processes of NRM projects is critical for increasing opportunities for sustainable activities, enhancing empowerment, for increasing efficiency, and long-term equitable and sustainable outcomes. Similarly, scholars such as Manfre and Rubin (2012) and Agrawal (2001) have shown that equitable gender participation is an important indicator of citizenship, a form of voice, and enables both men and women to build agency, improve their social networks and access to knowledge and information, ultimately leading to sustainability.

Community based forest management (CBFM) emerged as one of the CBNRM approaches to accommodate the voices and needs of the poor and marginalised members of the communities including women who live in and around the forests, and rely on forests as their source of livelihoods (Lewark *et al.*, 2011; FAO, 2007). One among the stated goals of CBFM is to ensure equal and full participation of all local forest user groups within communities, including men and women in every aspect of forest management such as planning, decision making, and implementation of project activities (Blomley, 2013; Nightingale, 2002). Also, these CBFM projects have shown commitment in ensuring equity, equality, and empowerment of women in locally based forest management activities (Blomley, 2013; Cornwall, 2003; Sarin, 2001). Gender equality in participation in CBFM projects is seen as an appropriate approach for ensuring long-term viability, effectiveness of sustainable and equitable conservation practices, and for improving governance and livelihood benefits (Blomley, 2013; Agarwal, 2009; FAO, 2007).

However, gender inequality in CBNRM and particularly CBFM projects, as pointed out by several project members, persists (Larson *et al.*, 2015; Banana *et al.*, 2012; Rodgers, 2012; Mwangi *et al.*, 2011; FAO, 2007; Agarwal, 2001). This is mainly attributed to ignorance of the contextual gendered differences and relations within the community; and this affects

the ability of women and men to participate more equally in influencing management decisions; resource management outcomes; local politics and strategic interactions (Agarwal, 2009; Resurreccion and Elmhirst, 2008; Cornwall, 2008; Blaikie, 2006). Major critical questions are raised on who attends the village meetings and participate in making decisions regarding the use, management, and the share of the natural resources' benefits, and the process and who is excluded in forest management projects (Cornwall, 2008; Agarwal, 2001 ). Available studies on the gendered participation in forest management projects have largely focused on gender composition in locally based management institutions and their effects specifically on forest condition and governance (e.g. Rout, 2018; Leisher *et al.*, 2015; Mwangi *et al.*, 2011; Agrawal, 2010). Scholars such as Dolisca (2006) have analysed various factors that hinder effective participation of women in forest management and conservation projects focusing on demographic, economic, and cultural factors without providing a framework in which they operate and become institutionalised. Less is said about the interplay between different factors which may produce an institutionalised exclusion of women and perpetuate gender inequality.

The paper examines whether or not there are differences on how male and female members are involved in the various aspects of the CBFM project in Tanzania by assessing gendered participation in labour within and outside the management institutions of CBFM. As an analytical framework, FPE emphasizes gender as a crucial variable in shaping access to, control over, and knowledge of natural resources that interact with other variable such as age, race and culture (Sundberg, 2017; Rocheleau *et al.*, 1996). Feminist scholars such as Rocheleau *et al.* (1996) and Sundberg (2017) have shown the importance of FPE in demonstrating how gender identities are constructed in and through relations with nature and everyday material practices.

The paper is based on data collected during the fieldwork that was undertaken from February 2017 to March 2018 in two CBFM villages of Kisangi and Kikole in Kilwa District, Tanzania. The selection of the villages was done purposively to include the villages in which the CBFM intervention has been implemented for about ten years in order to be able to assess the extent to which the intervention has succeeded in bringing out equality in participation. Both Kisangi and Kikole villages are neighbouring localities that have a similar landscape, socio-economic conditions, forest conditions, population and depend on forests, and history of forest protection.

Interviews were done with individuals and groups supplemented by review of documents and observation in meetings. A total of 60 interviews (34 men and 26 women) were conducted in the district and at community levels. At the community level interviews were done with selected village leaders, village natural resource management committee (VNRC) members, community-based organisations, and male and female members of the communities. Focus group discussions were carried out separately, and men and women were mixed in each village to make a total of 6 focus groups. Each focus group contained about eight to ten members, and a total of 54 members participated. Base on the sensitivity of the issue, separate focus group discussions were held purposively to allow for women to express their feelings freely, share their experiences and perspectives regarding their participation in participatory forest governance (CBFM). During the focus group discussions, participants were asked about their participation in various aspects of CBFM, the level of their participation, and the factors influencing their level of participation. Data analysis was done with the aid of qualitative analysis software NVIVO 12 where discourses describing men and women's works as different were identified and analysed.

### **Participation by Exclusion in CBFM in Kilwa**

In this section we discuss the nature of participation. It is divided into three section, the firsts on promotion of gender sensitive forest management in the policies; discourse portraying men's and women's work as different; and construction of women's time and distance as barriers their participation.

#### *Promotion of gender sensitive forest management in the policies*

In Tanzania, the National Forest Policy of 1998, the Forest Act of 2002, CBFM guideline of 2007, and the national CBFM Strategy of 2014, have highlighted gender concerns, protection of women's rights, and promotion of gender equality and women empowerment in forest-related projects (MNRT, 2007; 2002; URT, 1998,). For instance, the Tanzania National Forest Policy of 1998 (*Policy statement 39*) requires forest-related projects to ensure that all community members, including men and women, are given equal chances to participate in any planned activity (URT, 1998). Similarly, the Forest Act of 2002 (Section 33(2)) clearly specifies that, '*where a village land forest management committee (VNRC) is established, it shall be informed with due respect to gender balance*' (URT, 2002). This statement has also been emphasised in the CBFM Guidelines of 2007, established by the Ministry of Natural Resource and Tourism (MNRT). The guidelines also

require the election of the Village Natural Resource Committee (VNRC) to take into account gender to ensure equal representation of men and women in VNRC across hamlets (MNRT, 2007).

Apart from the Forest Policy, Regulations, and Guideline, the National Forest Programme (NFP) of 2001-2010 acknowledges the multiple roles that forests play in the rural life of many people, especially women (MNRT, 2001). This programme also promotes gender mainstreaming, recognizes the need for gender balanced community participation, and consideration of gender issues in participatory forest management project, including CBFM. The NFP showed that there have been inadequate considerations of the gender aspect in forest land management. Hence, one among its key priorities was the improvement of forest management estates through gender sensitive participatory management.

Following these commitments, Kilwa District has been working closely with NGOs and communities to enforce forest-related policies, laws, and guidelines, including gender inclusive policies. In the interview, officials at the district mentioned that the gender issue is mainstreamed in every process of establishing CBFM, decision making and planning, implementation of management plans and benefit sharing. They explained that during the establishment process, the CBFM guideline requires the villages to ensure that both men and women agree with the establishment of the project. Based on interviews with Mpingo Conservation Development Initiative (MCDI) and Kilwa District Forest Office (KDFO), the villages are required to submit to the district authority the documents that include the attendance list with names and signatures of men and women that attended the village meeting and agreed with the establishment of CBFM project, the villages are also required to submit the list of the elected VNRC members that must have at least one third female members of the committee for a village to get an approval to establish a CBFM. Similarly, during the interviews, village leaders said that both men and women were given equal opportunities to participate in CBFM activities such as forest management activities and forest-related meetings where all decisions about forests and their management were done. They also argued that, officials from the district forest office and others from NGOs normally come to monitor project activities and ensure that forest policies and guidelines, including gender inclusive policies, are effectively implemented.

Despite the good policies, laws and strategies that have been put in place to promote equal gender participation in forest management, the implementation of these policies on the ground, has faced many challenges.

Through analysing the discourses which describe the participation of women in the CBFM, we learned that over time cultural factors which prescribe men's and women's works as different have been institutionalised into the CBFM, and continue to marginalize women even in the space of forest management. The reproduction of the cultural space is also supported by fixing other factors such as time and space as influencing women participation; as such women are left to do household chores or assigned farming for subsistence while the well-paying forest management works are done by men. Women are not allowed to move without permission from men, a condition which makes them unable to take part in some of the forest management activities. This gender division of labour is made possible by discourses which portray women as weak for some of the forest management works. We highlight these discourses in the coming sections first, as propounded by men, then as they become solidified in the community and internalized, and in some cases accepted by women.

*Discourse portraying men's and women's work as different.*

The gendered division of labour in many rural settings associated men with the public sphere and women with the domestic sphere. Men are constructed as heads of households who are responsible for productive activities and income generation to meet household needs, while women are seen as responsible for childcare and household chores. Some women reported that this gendered division of labour has now transformed to the public sphere to discourage them from participating in community-based forest management. Evidence from the field indicates that, despite the emphasis on gender-balanced participation in all forest management activities, the masculine culture and tradition impede the enhanced participation of women in various forest-related activities such as forest patrols, beekeeping production, forest certification, forest production, harvesting, cutting and transporting timber. Discourses portraying women as not physically strong for these activities were captured in the field as follows:

*There are some kinds of forest-related activities that women are not capable of doing them. For instance, timber harvesting, cutting trees and transporting logs are masculine jobs. Women are not physically as strong as men to be able to perform them... [A male villager interviewed in Kisangi Village, 2018].*

To qualify for the job, one has to attend training. Most women have not attended training. Since men have been attending most of the seminars, they

have therefore gained experience over time to work in timber harvesting, which is a prerequisite for conducting some of the CBFM activities. Women on their part, lack the training, and are therefore automatically not qualified to perform such duties. Observation in all the studied villages, timber harvesting and certification process in the village land forest reserve (VLFR) were controlled by men. This is despite having a CBFM project, which claims to promote equal gender participation in forest management. This is not to say that women are not involved at all. There are women's works which are important for forest management such as protection, informal forest patrols, tree nursery and tree planting, painting and clearing forest boundaries, and in supplying food and water to men during timber harvesting and certification process but they are lowly paid. They are paid from TShs. 5,000 per day as compared to men and the work they do.

*Many women are involved in forest-related activities that require no formal trainings and knowledge. For instance, during tree planting exercise, clearing and painting forest boundaries many women do participate because no experience or formal training is needed; one is only needed to show up [Focus Group Discussion with women in Kikole Village, 2018].*

Men were seen in the most paying and what is considered more "valuable" (cash) forest related activities such as timber harvesting, timber certification, beekeeping production, and women are placed in less valued, lower and unpaid works such as forest protection, informal patrols, and tree nursery and planting. This adds cash on men's pocket even if he will give to a woman as a wife, but he has the power over it by the fact that he gained it not the wife as the comparison below shows:

*I have been involved several times in forest management activities such as cutting logs and transporting them, for which I am paid from 8,000 to 9,000 Tanzanian Shillings per log [Male, Kisangi Village].*

*I have been involved several times in tree planting projects in our village. These projects were initiated by officials from Kilwa District and also MCDI. I am paid 5000 Tanzanian shillings per day [Female, Kikole Village].*

Women, however, have contested their construction and gave evidence that they can do what are considered to be men's works. The quote below

presents a situation that happened in 2012; women struggled to participate in harvesting Mpingo trees just to prove men wrong. They successfully managed to harvest many Mpingo (Blackwood) trees under the CBFM certification arrangement and received equal payment as men:

*We surprised many men who considered us weak, and that we cannot harvest timber and logs. We harvested many Mpingo trees and received equal shares as men. This gave men a lesson that when given opportunities, women can also do wonders as men [Focus group discussion, Kisangi Village 2018].*

Besides forest harvesting, another activity in which women are excluded is the traditional beekeeping production that involves hanging beehives on the trees and climbing during harvest. The climbing of trees is considered by men to be “unacceptable” for women. Due to this discourse, all activities which require climbing trees such as fixing beehives, and honey harvesting are mostly done by men even though women can climb after wearing special clothes. It is also perceived that because honey harvesting is normally done during the night, most of women are unable to take part as they are busy preparing evening meals and taking care of their children.

Observation made during the fieldwork shows that male members dominate the beekeeping groups established in each studied CBFM Village. For instance, out of approximately 40 members from two beekeeping community groups in Kikole Village, only four members were women. In addition, the very few women who were involved in beekeeping production were mainly involved in the cleaning of beehives, processing and marketing of bee products, which were mostly done at the homesteads and therefore considered to be a women’s job. Men were involved in activities such as beehive fixing, night patrols, and honey harvesting, both of which were mainly done in the forest. This constitutes marginal involvement of women in beekeeping production.

#### *Exclusion and marginalisation of women in CBFM leadership position*

The leadership positions in VNRC consist of three posts, namely chairperson, secretary and treasurer. The chairperson and secretary posts are considered the top and most influential leadership positions. Therefore, they form another point of struggle between men and women. Men also prefer to be in the most influential leadership positions, leaving women to the heavy duty but less influential positions such as treasury. Women are

conceptualized as having good experience of managing, keeping records, and budgeting household income, based on their gender roles and that give them good experience of handling community funds when selected as treasurers. In all the CBFM studied villages there were no female chairpersons or secretaries in the VNRCs. During the discussion, women considered the treasurer posts as a lower post which exerts less influence in the decision-making process in CBFM. Even when they contest and win discourses portraying women as incapable surface, and some end up resigning:

*...They looked for a reason to remove me from my position. They claimed that I failed to perform well my responsibilities, which was not true. Since then, I have never heard of any woman elected to lead as a VNRC chairperson or secretary in our village [a woman in a FGD of men and women together, 2018].*

Some village leaders and men interviewed perceived the top leadership positions to be for men, constructing women as “lacking commitment, incapable, and with no experience in leadership positions and forest-related issues.” The construction of women as “incapable” in leadership, but capable with household chores goes hand in hand with cultural attachment of women to domestic responsibilities that restrict their effective participation in development activities in the public sphere as men. As a result, many women fail to get confidence and experience in communication and leadership skills, confidence in forest-related issues (Village leader interviewed in Kikole, 2017) and the circle of exclusion and marginalisation continues. The process of getting higher leadership positions is also constructed as competitive and one which required high commitment which women, are constructed as not having such attribute:

*These posts [Chairperson and Secretary] are very competitive and require high commitments and experience that are lacking among women for a long time... This decreases the likelihood of women from being elected as top leaders [Interview with a village leader, Kisangi 2017].*

Women have opposed the male’s view that they were not committed to hold top leadership positions, and that men are “born naturally to lead” and women are just ‘wives’, ‘mothers’ and ‘caregivers’ who need to be guided by men. Women pointed out that they would like to have a female leader in the VNRC but have been receiving opposition from male members who

have control over decision making regarding who should be a leader. Women reported that sometimes their village leaders and men use religious grounds to subordinate them from holding top leadership positions. They complained that men considered themselves as “Imams” of their families, and that women need to be loyal, respectful and obedient to their husbands as pointed out below:

*We would also like to have a female chairperson in the VNRC. ... Even though sometimes women compete for top leadership positions, they are badly defeated by male members. This is because, male leaders control decisions on who should lead the VNRC. Male members rarely choose female over male leaders because they believe that an institution with economic potential like a VNRC cannot be led by a woman [Mixed FGD, Kisangi, 2018].*

*Men do not trust women when it comes to holding leadership positions. They consider themselves born naturally as leaders and “Imams” of their families. That is why women are always after their husbands in decision making (FGD with women in Kikole Village, 2018).*

This paper emphasises that, in addition to the efforts made by the CBFM projects to promote women participation in forest management, there is a need for the CBFM to address the socio-cultural factors underlying the relationship between men and women in different aspects such as representation in leadership positions to ensure full participation of women. Women see that men still perceived women as weak and less confident to lead top and most demanding leadership positions such as a chairperson and a secretary.

Likewise, women believed that the exclusion of women in serving in various posts in VNRC was not because women leaders could not perform well their responsibilities, or because the posts require high commitments and capability, but it is a men’s trick to keep women away from contesting for leadership. A woman in a focus group discussion in Kisangi CBFM village had this to say:

*Men assume that we [women] cannot lead; that is why they use whatever trick they have to drive women away from competing for the top leadership positions [FGD with women in Kisangi, 2018].*

Marginalisation of women in holding the top leadership positions in forest management committees is haunted by men's creation of women as "inexperience", "incompetence" and "incapable." Other scholars have also reported that women are less represented in the highest and most powerful positions within CBFM committees, and that the positions given to women are quite often those of a lower status such as treasurers or other supportive positions, making them do a lot of work as well (Samndong and Kjosavik, 2017; Evans *et al.*, 2017; Coleman and Mwangi, 2013; Manfre and Rubin, 2012). Such constructions are said to be the mechanisms of constraining and of marginalisation and disempowering women (Davidson and Black, 2001). It is a male domination which ultimately limits the ability of women to serve other influential positions that holds more power in decision-making or when elected they are denied power to make decision as this woman said:

*Although women are elected as treasurers, they have no control over the revenues collected. The top leaders are in charge of everything... Treasurers are only consulted when transactions are made in order to sign the documents [FGD women in Kisangi Village, 2018].*

Observation made in Kikole Village also found that the VNRC secretary (man) instead of the VNRC treasurer (woman) handled financial transaction files and receipt books. He was also the one who provided all information regarding financial issues of the VNRC during the interview. During the FGD with women, some women explained that sometimes women are just selected to fulfill the legal obligation in terms of women's participation and to satisfy the donor agencies and projects requirements but are not the one who do the work. This also denies them experience and upward movement in the long run. As one female leader in Kikole Village shared her experience on this matter:

*During the election period, village leaders ensure women are elected as leaders. However, this is not because they are always gender sensitive, but to fulfill the CBFM condition that women should also be involved in VNRC leadership. Also, supporting NGOs for instance, MCDI and the Government require CBFM villages to adhere to forest rules and guidelines that have been put in place [A woman Interviewed in, Kikole village, 2018].*

In some cases, women could not serve the posts assigned to them for the whole term as they have been replaced several times. Some women were

removed, or resigned from leadership positions for jealousy reasons from men who want to have the opportunities, and some by their husbands. This as we think is fueled by the cultural notions that women cannot lead. For instance, during the focus group discussion one woman, who was formerly a VNRC chairperson, shared her experience of being removed in the management committee which has led other women to be afraid of taking the position as they feel ashamed:

*For the first time in our village, in 2011, I was elected the first VNRC chairperson. I faced many challenges from male leaders. I only served the post for one year before I got fired by the village government leaders because they were unhappy by the fact that I received many invitations to attend seminars, workshops, and meetings at the district level and exposure visits outside the district. Other village leaders and some members in the committee were not happy with that situation. They thought that higher authorities favoured me for their (men) interests. Some village leaders claimed that they did not receive the same opportunities as I used to receive from the top authority. They looked for a reason to remove me from my position. They claimed that, I failed to perform well my responsibilities, which was not true. Since then, I have never heard about any woman elected to lead as a VNRC chairperson or secretary in our village (A woman in a mixed FGD, 2018).*

#### *Construction of women's time and distance as barriers their participation*

Another layer of differential participation of women was based on the location of the village and distance of a house from the village centre. If the village is near the centre then there will be more involvement of women because this is considered to be close enough to home for women to continue working on their household chores. Participation in forest-related activities was very low among women from distant hamlets as compared to women from village centres. During the interviews, women from distant hamlets reported that their homesteads are located far from the village center where all partnership activities such as forest-related meetings and trainings are conducted and also, other information about forest related activities is provided. Women from distant hamlets complained that the distance from their hamlets to the village centre affects their ability to participate in partnership activities where they can get information about

various forest-related activities and get a chance to be elected or participate actively in management committees. Other women were concerned with the issue of security if they have to walk a long distance from their homesteads to the village centre for meetings or to the forest to participate in CBFM activities. This was reported to discourage a majority of women from distant hamlets from participating in CBFM activities. Some women interviewed from distant hamlets had this to say:

*We usually have to walk not less than two hours from our homesteads to the village centre to attend village meetings or other partnership activities. Sometimes we have to cross Matandu River, which becomes flooded during the rainy season. This discourages many of us from participating in CBFM activities at the village centre [A woman from Mbunga hamlet, Kikole, 2018].*

*It is very difficult for a woman to walk a long distance alone and pass through the forest due to security reason. There is a risk of being attacked by wild animals or rapped on the way [Interview with a woman in Mikulyungu Hamlet, Kisangi, 2018].*

In the quote above, not only was the long distance tied to women than men but also risks of insecurity on the road. Distance is constructed as a factor for women missing information but it is not the case for men. As it was put below, is the mobility issue which brings the question of power to move. From theories of migration, women are generally constructed as less mobile as compared to men. The physical distance is enlarged by the fact that women have to ask for permission, hence the distance. This however is taken as a natural reason for women's inability to participate but in fact it is a social construction of distance adding a layer of socially constructed distance:

*Because of the distance, sometimes it becomes difficult to receive information about various forest-related issues on time. At least men are more mobile and can easily receive information on time than us [A woman interviewed from distant sub village in Kisangi village, 2018].*

The social construction of the space of women's places of work as the households, limits mobility of women to the village centre for participation in different CBFM's activities. As it was reported, women are expected to

do other household chores and taking care of children. Therefore, absence from home for a long time to work in the CBFM activities far away from home is not possible in a society that is male dominated as the one in Kilwa District. Women in some cases do not take part in some activities, and they let their husband take part. One woman from a distant hamlet in Kikole Village complained:

*I prefer not to participate in any forest-related activities that affect my household responsibilities. Although I sometime wish to participate in village meetings held at the village centre, each time I think of the distance to and from the meeting place, and think of other household responsibilities that will wait for me while I am away, then I hesitate to participate [Interview with a woman, Kikole village, 2018].*

Tadesse et al. (2017), Musyoka et al. (2013) and Lise (2000) have indicated that the homestead distance is a determinant factor for individuals' decision to participate in CBFM activities, but here we see social construction of distance that is affecting more women than men. Though men and women are affected by distance, it is only constructed as a problem when explain women lack of attendance in meetings and information. Clearly distance here is re-constructed as a problem to women only. The CBFM space then becomes the place at which this reproduction happens, and allows more men in meetings while the forest management policies claim to promote gender equality.

Despite the efforts to increase women representatives in the VNRC, gender representation in VNRC has not been uniform across hamlets. Women interviewed from distant hamlets lamented that female representatives in VNRC from their hamlets were very few compared to the village centre. Similarly, the information collected from the village government offices showed the variation on gendered representation.

Women representation from distant hamlets, namely Nanyati, Mbunga and Mikulyungu, is low compared to female representatives from the nearby hamlets of Kikole and Kisangi. In some cases, Mbunga, a Kikole Village based hamlet had no representative in the VNRC, and had only one female representative for the 2016/8 and 2019/21 term. The respondents interviewed from distant hamlets provided several reasons why there were few representatives from their hamlets. According to them, for the one to be elected as a VNRC member, he/she must be an active member of the community who attends village meetings frequently, speaks well in public

meetings, is well known and respected in the village, has good experience in forest-related issues, and participates more actively in forest-related activities. Such qualities are not possessed by women because of their continued marginalisation from taking part for constructed reasons such as “distant hamlets.” While CBNR management assumes that they have taken the management closer to the community, the construction of closer and distant villages has the aim of discriminating against other villages, particularly those in the sub-villages, but more excluded are women who are not allowed to be mobile, and have household chores to handle. One woman from a distant hamlet in Kisangi Village was quoted saying:

*The distance from our hamlet to the village centre discourages many of us from participating in partnership activities. As a result, we become less informed about forest-related issues and become in a marginal chance to be selected when competing for membership in VNRC compared to women at the village centre [Interview with a woman in Kisangi village, 2018].*

The quote below shows that women spend most of their time on reproductive, household and farming activities, increasing their daily hours of work in comparison to men. This multiplicity of roles reduces women’s time that would be available for participation in CBFM project activities such as meetings. For instance, during focus group discussions and interviews, women reported that forest-related meetings collided with the time when women are busy in farms, making men participate more, and women lack continuity of issues. Women pointed out that most of the village meetings were held during the day or late afternoon and end late in the evening. One female member interviewed in Kisangi village reported:

*Time allocated for meetings does not favour majority of us [women]. Most of the meetings are held during the late afternoon, and mostly at the village centre. Sometimes these meetings take long time to finish. When we attend the meetings, we become impatient, because we have other household chores and farming responsibilities waiting for us. It is very rare that men allow their wives to forego domestic and farming responsibilities for the sake of meetings. That is why some women, especially those from distant hamlets refuse to participate [FGD with women, Kisangi village, 2018].*

Unlike women, men are free to participate in village meetings because they do not have any constraint. Also, men do not need to ask for permission from their wives to attend village meetings or any other development activities in the villages. This gives men the advantage of having access to information, opportunity to make and influence management decisions, having first contact with collaborating agencies, and access to networks as compared to women.

Time constraint was also observed in women's participation in forest management activities. During the discussion women complained that some of the forest management activities such as forest patrols were arranged to happen at the time when most women are not able to participate, for example during the farming seasons. They identified two types of forest patrols; the day and the night patrol. According to the MCDI official interviewed, the night patrols were done to monitor birds that were found in the VLFRs under CBFM to assess forest condition. They also mentioned that the patrolling for birds was normally done early in the morning. However, because forests were located far away from the village centre, members were required to spend all the night walking and waiting in the forest until dawn. Many female VNRC members interviewed expressed that not all the time they were able to participate in night patrols. They claimed that night patrols were very challenging for the majority of female members especially married women because they would not be permitted by their husbands. Also, women with young children, and those living in distant hamlets are usually unable to attend the patrols regularly. However, they were tempting to participate due to the payment:

*Night patrols are very challenging. You have to sacrifice your household and children to patrol in the forests. Sometimes we are just forced to participate because of the allowances that are paid [woman, Kisangi, 2018].*

*Sometimes our husbands become very reluctant to give us permission to participate in night patrols. They are jealous; they know that we are accompanied by male members [A woman, Kisangi, 2018].*

*I live in Mbunga, a hamlet, which is located far away from the village centre and VLFR. When assigned to patrol the forests at night I have to walk from my hamlet to the village centre for almost two hours in the afternoon to join other members at the village centre, and then we start our journey*

*together in the midnight to patrol the VLFR. This consumes a lot of time, and not all women can manage to do so [A woman interviewed in Kikole Village, 2018].*

Similarly, during the mixed FGD, male members mentioned that forest patrols that are done at night are less safe for women to participate due to wild animals, poachers, and rain. Hence, because of the challenges of night patrols, women have at times asked male members to perform their assigned tasks at night or requested the village leaders to assign them in patrol activities that are performed during the day.

Women participation in forest-related activities varies seasonally due to farming responsibilities. Women said that during the farming seasons, they move temporarily to their distant farms to take care of their farms and guard them against wild animals. They claimed that it is their responsibility to ensure food security at the household level; hence they have to spend most of their time in food production. During that time, it became difficult for them to participate in CBFM activities including forest related meetings where most of forest management decisions are made and different information about forest are provided. In fact, the CBFM became ‘another man’ that operates away from home. Due to this situation, men, a majority of who are heads of households are in better positions to participate in forest-related activities and assume that they represent their wives. It is very clear from the quote below that men control the cash economy and women the subsistence:

*Women’s participation in village meetings varies seasonally. Based on our traditional gender roles, women are the ones who are responsible for migrating temporarily to distant farms to cultivate and take care of farms against wild animals. However, this happens only in farms that we cultivate for subsistence use. Men normally control farms for cash production such as sesame crop that is not affected by wild animals. Hence, they do not need to spend their time to guard farms. This gives them ample opportunity to participate and represent us in village meetings [FGD with women in Kisangi Village, 2018].*

## **Conclusion**

This paper aimed at bringing what seemed to be somewhat an old discussion about “women’s and men’s works” but linking it to current ongoing

activities in the CBFM forest certification. It highlights points of gender inequalities and women's exclusion despite the claims for CBFM and certification for sustainability. It shows how certification in CBFM projects has perpetuated "men's and women's work" despite having put in place gender equality policies, making CBFM as *another man* away from home. Women's exclusion happens through discourses which reproduce culture, time and place for women, different from men, intending to exclude and marginalise women from effective participation. The paper challenges global production systems of timber certification, which claims to promote forest certification with programmes that have gender equality as a component but it has not brought any changes in gender relations as a result there is still participation by exclusion which is not sustainable development. It calls for scrutinization of the CBFM programmes to women's participation in forest management and all natural resource management policies, practices and programmes.

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