

# Organisational structure of CBO's in natural resource management

## CBNRM TOPICS

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### Background:

Ever since community based resource management (CBNRM) became a new tool for rural development in the early 90's of the last century, there is much variation among countries or even regions regarding the definition of CBNRM. However, much of the variation is caused by varied degrees of integration of the paramount principles that make up CBNRM. Obviously, CBNRM aims for some joined people, one or more villages or any other mostly rural groups whose purpose is in a wider sense the general benefit. These CBO's (community based organisations) utilise local natural resources to generate revenue in order to finance the objectives of the group which are ideally referring to the development of a local area. Where a fair but rational share of benefits that is driven by written by-laws and the overall objectives strived for, is a natural course of action. Revenue is normally generated through market participation but the public can likewise remunerate NRM CBO's for services that are of general interest but taken for granted and are normally hard to quantify financially. It goes without saying that returns have to exceed costs and that input must be positively correlated to the economic value, if, at all possible, at the individual level. The utilization has naturally to be sustainable to ensure the integrity of the ecosystem and long term income. To do so, the devolution of authority from government to a particular CBO over a certain resource or resource containing area is absolutely crucial. This encompasses not only land tenure but also the rights to plan and set quotas. The empowerment must as well comprise capacity building in order to enable the CBO's to fulfil their new tasks.

Furthermore, it is essential that governments does not interfere with the expenditure of accrued revenues be it through legislation or political influence. The fundamental idea behind CBNRM is the assumption that decentralization leads to more effective, profitable and sustainable processes when remote state interest will be superseded by private interest and financial resources remain where they are needed most. Finally the constitution or by-law should have a strong democratic orientation to control management derailment. To make these ingredients really work towards the expected development the broader management unit (stakeholders/role-players like NGO's, international agencies, village committees, local and district government etc.), should be as lean as possible and act as an adviser/facilitator only.

To sum it up, general macro and micro conditions of CBO's dealing with NRM that render them more likely successful are as follows:

- Devolution of authority (decentralization, empowerment)
- Freedom of planning
- Monetary sovereignty

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- Democratic approach
- Capacity support
- A valuable resource
- Sustainable resource use
- General benefit and fair sharing

The past has shown that the higher the degree of realization of each of these general points the higher the probability of a satisfying community based natural resource use project.

However, zooming in to ground level is where CBNRM becomes more complicated. The wide variety of resources ranging from management of wild/domesticated animals and their habitat (meat/fish production, hunting/fishing licenses, game/fish viewing) to the management of botanicals and their habitat (timber, non-timber products) to the management of areas that provide ecological services or represent other ecological values that are worthy of protection (inland [ground]water, catchment areas, marine/coastal areas, watersheds, wetlands; soil and air, landscape, species, etc.) demands different CBO structures as well. Not only the resource itself but even more so the degree to which value is added to a resource is asking for a specific CBO structure. In general, efforts to render a CBO viable increase with decreasing abundance and/or value of the resource. For instance, a CBO in possession of an elephant rich concession will have no problems to sell many hunting licenses at relatively low costs as there are normally, except maybe from wildlife compensations, no significant expenses necessary to run that business. The same is true for special skills or exceptional marketing commitment. The requirements are low and meet the abilities of mostly uneducated rural people in developing countries. On the other hand it is much more input needed to sell a resource that entails gathering, processing and marketing to turn it into a product in demand. After many years of CBNRM it can be seen that many projects of the latter type have been abandoned or are idle on donors drip after NGO's have moved out.

However, some are still active and viable and can be seen as examples as they have followed the rule of the more demanding the business the more support and commitment is needed.

Lessons learned:

The following example refers primarily to the latter described situation. The "scope" is a rural low educated environment where a little value resource needs added value and marketing in order to generate sufficient revenue to long term sustain a CBO. Typical resources are botanicals like fruits, nuts, medicinal plants, raw materials for crafting (fronds, grasses, fruit and nut shells, dead wood, etc.) and alike. The sale of these materials is often part of the livelihood of individuals for which the proceeds are sufficient. However, the activities of these individuals are often not monitored (or much harder) and they do not serve community objectives.

The CBO that is more likely to be successful under these conditions could have the structure of figure 1 or similar according to the specific situation. Besides the CBO there is a structure that is organised like a private company. It can be registered as such but does not have to. The important feature is the "relative" independence from the board of the CBO when it comes to the daily operational business. Primarily this helps to compensate for eventual

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dysfunctionalities of the board which are not at all uncommon. Secondly, it is advantageous to have management staff which is not only less attached to the CBO board but also personally not interlinked with the community to avoid too much interference and less constraints by local circumstances.

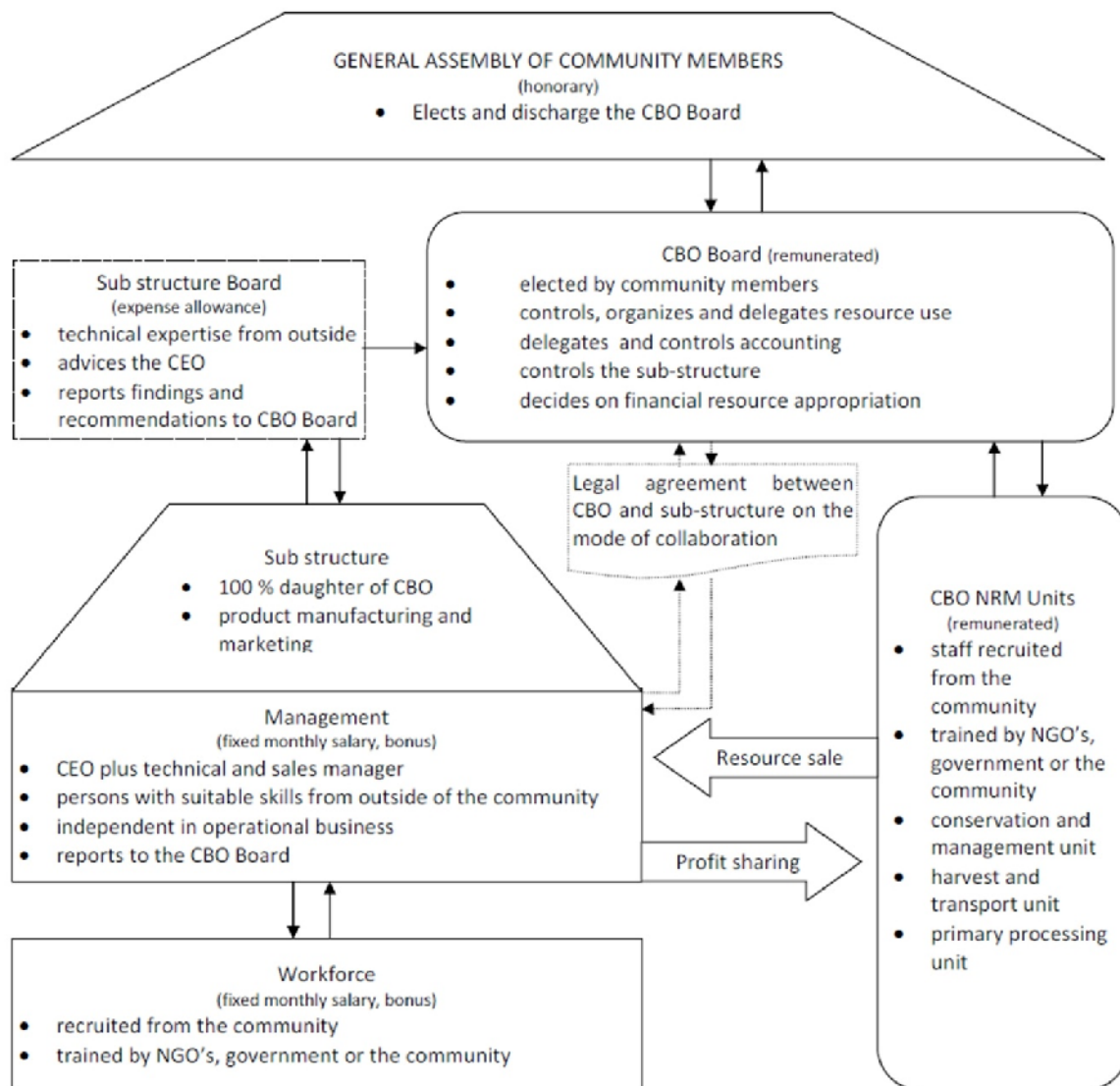


Fig.1: Possible organisational structure of a NRM CBO

However, regular reporting to the board and accountability is mandatory. It needs to be emphasised that this construction is not a joint venture, as the joint venture option is only the least best in most cases for sociological developmental reasons. The possibility for self-determined learning/development should be significantly higher with the presented variant. Thirdly the external staff can bring in the much needed managerial skills of production, quality control, accounting, marketing and above all commitment that are beyond short term training level in the beginning. In contrast to the more indirect steering of the sub structure the CBO will directly manage the resource itself. The community is solely in charge of the implementation of the resource management plans that have to be obligatorily

developed prior to the start of the business that include annual planning, harvesting, monitoring of agreed ecological indicators, compensation and improvement activities, intruder control, etc.

The company is owned by the CBO and the board of the CBO has the right to take decisions regarding the management personnel. Furthermore, there is a technical board that is manned by external experts in the specific fields, which advises the management on best practises and provides experience. Findings and recommendations will be reported both to the sub structure CEO and the CBO chairman.

To ensure long term success it is very important with this variant to have a detailed agreement on the mode of cooperation between the two bodies in place. Authorities, responsibilities as well as benefit sharing have to be laid down in writing after a comprehensive participatory process. The community is receiving revenue through three channels, firstly through the provision of labour (employees with the sub structure, peace work for the sub structure), secondly it is selling the resource to the sub structure and thirdly part of the profit after costs and necessary investment will be transferred to the CBO.