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Participatory Forest Management in Tanzania and livelihoods of rural people – evidence from 12 villages

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Participatory Forest Management (PFM) in Tanzania aims to improve forest condition, livelihoods for local people and natural resources governance at the village level. Using data collected from 12 villages and forest areas with (n=10) and without (n=2) participatory forest management across eastern Tanzania we aim to assess how livelihoods of villagers compare between forest management regimes. Data show that most villagers across the study sites are poor, with small numbers of wealthier people. There is little overall income variation across forests under PFM, but there is considerable variation of benefits from the PFM forest between village wealth classes. Richer village members are able to secure preferential access to the PFM forest and utilise it (or benefit from issuing licences) for livestock keeping (in drier forests), charcoal production (close to access routes to towns), and harvesting (where high value timber remains). Data suggest that the PFM approach has made certain sectors of the community more wealthy, typically those setting the rules and enforcing them. But they also indicate that the overall impacts across the community are marginal – and may be negative for the poorest community members.