**Gazi mp Committee member follow up**

I: good morning. Please tell us your name

R: my name is (says his name).

I: what is your role in the committee?

R: my duties include representing the rest of the communities in Mikoko Pamoja (mp), even though mp is for the community, there is no way that entire makonge community would there in the committee. There are representatives who make the committee, and act as the “eye of the community”. and the duties is to push the project forward to progress. The duties include protection of the forest, planting mangroves, and if the money has been sent from abroad after selling carbon dioxide, it us the committee members who sits first and discusses, to see how the money can be used and whether there are projects that need to be undertaken. Then we contact the rest of community, tell them that the money has been sent and that they should discuss to see what projects the money can fund.

I: in those many duties, are there things that happen yet they are not just?

R: yes. There are things that happen yet they are not just. You see, us like community, there is the mp project that was brought and there are those partners or the scientists who did the research and decided to bring this project for community. but now there are things that are going on that make us feel like we have been sidelined abit. For example, in the process of giving out the opportunities, just like that opportunity of co-ordinator. In the year, I think 2012 when mp was launched, and it happened that a co-ordinator was needed, in that advertisement, it was written that the coordinator should come from Gazi Bay, that is either from makongeni or Gazi. But that is where the problem started. The girl who became the coordinator was called mwanakkombo, and mwanakombo, was, if you ask anyboby whether the girl lived in makongeni or Gazi, no body knows, know body knows where that girl came from. What happened, at the interview panel, there was a chief, area chief, the area chief favoured that girl until should was selected to be the coordinator. And in that aadvertisement, the requirement was that the coordinator should come from Gazi bay. Us like the youths from gaxi bay we had doudts about her and where she had come from. We could say “ once mwanakombo comes here, we will not listen to her because she doesn’t come from GAzi bay and she doesn’t know how mangroves are”. Now from there, we felt there was no justice, because that was one thong that was done sidelining us as community from Gazi bay. You see when these projects come in Gazi bay, it is fo the purpose of benefiting that community.

I: that’s true.

R: you see hen we went for interview at that time, because even me I went, and another neighbor here also went for that interview, but at the end we realized there was no fairness because the requirement was already put in the advertisement.

I: Did you also find it unfair when Salim became the co-ordinator?

R: after wanakombo, salim became the co-ordiantor. What happened, she got the administrator of, and so Salim was called in to act in that position of co-ordinator. In this case we were contented because Salim comes from Gazi bay. Because he knows these villages and he also knows all these homesteads, and if there is a project, and there are things tha need to be discussed concerning mp, when he calls people, they go for those meetings and they could listen to him. While when mwanakombo called for a meeting, people could not go and some could ask, “who is this mwanakombo? What can she tell us?” some people could even say “does she know mangroves more than me?”, because the person saying this was born and grown up here and he knows a lot about mangrove than that girl.

Even this recent one happened the same way. Because it is something that was not in the constitution, and it was not a must that it had to be put in the constitution because the community is us who were to benefit.

I: could the the reason why you didn’t include it in the constitution be that you didn’t know that some other people would control the process?

R: yes. We didn’t know some people would bring their people. We could see that things were not going right in the mp.

I: is there anything else that you can see to that it is not just?

R: on another side, through the KMFRI office, I can talk just a bit about the things that are not just. Like recently, I the committee we heard there was an issue of volunteers. That there will be volunteers who will be coming and they will be working with mp.

I: from where?

R: different places. May be others are students. We as committee members, we felt that this was not just because, if its volunteering, because community is the one that hold Mikoko Pamoja, those volunteers to come through MP committee. The committee is the one that decides, and so that committee can be able to evaluates. And another question is we are told there will be brought volunteers from other places, from this community of ours, we cannot get youths who can become volunteers?

I: the volunteers, will be volunteering to do what?

R: in those programmes of mp, maybe there are those who will have studied, and maybe they will want to come as interns, such like things, and some other people, may just volunteer and come. It could be somebody from high school or college, and such a person decides to just volunteer. So we are seeing like it is that way. If there are opportunities for volunteer, first through KMFRI office, they should explain to us as the community, that there are opportunities for volunteer.

I: who informed the committee that there would be volunteering?

R: it came through that office of KMFRI Gazi, they are the ones who came and told us this.

I: so you are proposing that these volunteers should be passing through the office of mikoko pamoja committee?

R: yes. They should pass through the office of committee, mp. If they have to pass through the office of MKFRI, they pass through there so that they are known that there are volunteers, then they be brought to us the committee, and we be told that these people want this and that in doing work with mp. The committee will evaluate to see that theses volunteer; are the ones we are going to agree to work with depending on the rules that we will have.

But we too as committee, we have a concern and we have a question that we are asking ourselves; “why? Does it mean in our office we cannot volunteers?”. You mean there are no opportunities youths from the village can become volunteers, they work until they get that experience?

Just like what we were saying yesterday, in that position of coordinator, and it not the position of coordinator alone, other activities in that office, there are those that may be done by people from these communities, they can be trained, they come as volunteers. And in all those things of mp, those who will be benefiting will be the community. that way it will be fair.

I: when these volunteers come, do you think the committee would want them to be paying something small to the mp.

R: to be sincere, the committee has not talked about this and they have not thought of it. Because, may this person is a student there is no way such a person will be told to pay. But what us we want is “this person who has been told to come and volunteer, what has he/she come to do?” you know there are those people you are told they are volunteering, then such a person is given an opportunity for a job. It might happen. What we want is, if this person is given an opportunity to volunteer, if a member or a person from Gazi bay, can do it, we just give the opportunity to that person. And even though next time there won’t be a job opportunity, atleast that oerson will have gained the necessary experiences.

I: this volunteer will be under who?

R: the programmes are usually arranged from aces. There are those programmes, like for planting, restoration, nursery establishment among others. These are programmes that are already scheduled. So if the volunteer is coming, us as the committee should be informed through coordinator, because the coordinator knows about these programmes an knows who need to be done. So he communicates to use this information, and the committee communicates with the volunteer, as one of our group member.

I: the volunteer will be reporting to who?

R: if he is student, he/she can report to the concerned person.

I: but the what do you as the communitte want?

R: What we want, is we take control, and when he/she is coming, we should know what he is coming to do in mp and also we want him/her to come to us now. Not just bringing a person to us and telling us that this is the volunteer, you are going to work with him/her, and these are the activities you are going to do with him/her. This, as community, we are seeing like it is opposite of what we want.

I: are there other things that are not just?

R: there are a number of unjust things. Like you see the community, especially those from Gazi, are the ones who knows the KMFRI office too well. We see like this office of KMFRI, in the projects that are coming in future, you were given an example, yesterday, of the board walk project. What people proposed was construction of a dispensary. But now depending on individual self-interest, some body proposed a board walk. Leaders from the office of KMFRI, somebody suggests that instead of putting up a dispensary, let us put up a board walk. Because he sees, once he is in that boardwalk project, the way the money will be used, he has high chances of gaining benefits, as opposed to construction of a dispensary. If it is the dispensary, there will first be the bill of quantities(BoQ), and such like things, and then later once it is completed, infrastructure officers will come and do inspection, to certify everything is done accordingly. So these ones now, require that whatever is put up is upto required standards. Standard means enough money. But if you say you are putting up that board walk, nobody will bother, because they know that one is for the group. So, if the figure required is ksh. 1000, it is changed and it is added zero to become ksh.10000 you see? So what we want, in these projects, if there is money from a donor who want the money to come to the gazi bay community, whatever the community proposes to be done, is what is done for them. Not just one person to decide this is what is going to be done because of his own interest.

I: is there anything else like that that has ever happened?

R: I am not aware of it.

I: does mp do planting? How many trees do you plant per year?

R: yes we do planting and the target is about 4000 trees per year. Sometimes we don’t reach the target may due to weather challenges. If rains are not adequate, many of them dried up.

I: there are trees that mp planted, casuarina, so that people can get alternative source of wood. There are those people who used to go to the mangroves to cut trees for construction or other domestic uses. so those people who were denied that opportunity to access and use those mangrove resources, did they benefit from those casuarina?

R: there are no casuarinas here in makonge at this time.

I: what happened to those that were planted?

R: those casuarinas were planted in 2013 or 2014. The plants grew and were harvested. There was no plan that after the plants were harvested, they would be planted again. There was no plan of continuing with the planting. There was no continuity.

I: why ?

R: that’s where challenges are. For me, a short period after that I travelled out of the community and therefore I don’t know why it never happened.

I: after they harvested the trees, those people who were going to the mangroves for construction and domestic wood, are they the ones who benefited?

R: the trees were sold to the local community. right now, there was that programme of establishing a woodlot. They planted a number of trees there in school, but depending on the weather, it has been a problem. But the target was that we plant enough number of trees, in the school.

I: so you have said after the initial trees were harvested, the trees were sold to the community. you know too well, that those people who were going to get construction and firewood from mangroves are not well of people. KFS was selling to them like a load of firewood ksh.100.00 for a whole month. So now, you as mp you planted trees and you wanted them to come and buy. Was that just?

R: I think there was no just. Like in the lower parts of the mangrove forest, it was being protected but there was a kind of freedom, when you compare with those casuarina trees that were planted. Fairness is lacking because the planted trees were limited unlike in the mangrove forests, which is so wide. For casuarina, the number and area were limited, and until it matured, unlike in mangroves, where anytime you get the wood. For justice, the whole community, everybody living in the Gazi bay, could have been given seedlings to plant in their own land and this project be followed up and monitoring to be done. Maybe after 5 years, the whole community members, would be having trees. And a rule, be that once you cut you replace by planting.

I: so the casuarina project ended?

R: yes it ended.

I: once the trees were harvested and sold, money entered the MP account?

R: now that where it’s confusing. Now in that school where the casuarina was planted, I don’t know whether there was an MoU that people signed, of percentage of income from those trees or what? I don’t know. But what I know is that that money didn’t enter into the mp group account.

I: there is the water supplied in the community. this water supply project was started by MP. Is it the mp that established these committees that deal with water, planting, school repairs and books etc? are there a committee in the first place?

R: in the mp committee, there are two ways. There is a subcommittee that comes from makongeni. Now, those who come from makongeni, if there is any project that has been proposed, initially the community was called for a meeting and explained to about the project. If they agree, a small cub-committee is formed, and that is how this water subcommittee was formed. And evn now, …..

I: the committee is made up of how many people?

R: at that time, I can’t recall how many they were but now I think they are about 13. These 13 embers, include some members from the main mp committee and some members from the community.

The water project had some complexities emanating from the owner of the water well. The owner of the well was an old man from this village who dug the well to help community members for free. Afterwards the water tower was put up by this project and it was proposed that the water can be supplied so that everybody benefits. So afterwards, the person who was the chairman of the water committee was not doing the right things, because, there was no transparency. There were no meetings to explain to people how much money was being collected from water consumers and how that money was being used.

I: who now owns that water project?

R: the project is owned by mp.

I: how much are the rates of water charges?

R: 20 litres the consumer pays ksh. 1.00. according to meter readings for every litre of water consumed, you pay 1 bob which is so fair.

I: some people complain that the water is so high.

R; initially people were complaining because they didn’t know how they were paying. At the end of the month one is given a figure based on readings from the water meter, people were complaining because they didn’t know how they were being charged. Later they were called for a meeting and explained to.

I: so the money collected from water business is deposited to the mp account?

R: no. there is an account that was opened by the water committee so once that money is collected, it is deposited in that account. There were things that were not straight. Those who were water chairmen, they were stealing that money, so the chairman was changed, another one was appoint, he did the same, he was removed, and now at this time, the owner of the well got annoyed with the kind of stealing that was going on. So he disconnected that water supply and people could not get water.

I: was he being paid some money as the owner of the well?

R: no. at that time he was not being paid anything at all. And that is one of the reasons why he started complaining because he saw, those chairmen were benefitting themselves from his well and he was not getting anything in return.

So, people, the committee and the owner of the well sat down and made some terms and conditions and this resolved the issues. So, right now he is being paid.

I: you as the mp committee members, such a subcommittee that was created by the mother mp project, don’t you think this subcommittee should be remitting some money back to the mother project for the development and welfare of the project?

R: I have not seen this happen. This is because, when this project came, the main aim was for the community to benefit. So if its about developing the mp project, it the community themselves to dedicate themselves, in protecting the forest, not destroying the forests, and if there is a planting activity, those who will be selected, they go there and participate.

I: what is mp planning to do in future?

R: in this place of ours, our objective was to achieve the target of trees to be planted, we protect the mangroves, and everybody should be protecting the forest.

I: when it comes to planting, as mp group, do you plant in the mp designated area or you plant in those other areas outside mp designated areas.

R: when planting, we do it in the designated area. Because in that office, from their research, there are those sites that they identified and said restoration has to be done in those areas.so if it planting, we go to those identified areas. those areas are within the mp designated sites and outside this area.

I: there is MP as a cbo, but there are also other user groups. During planting, do you involve other user groups?

R: it depends on the number of seedlings to be planted. Eg if trees to planted are 1000, from the committee and from the office people estimate how many people are needed. Then, some of the committee members will go to plant, and then they select people randomly. Randomly in the village or from user groups. In this side, there are members from home street over there, that organization, some members who are in the user group are included in the planting activities. And some random members from the community.

I: are there some communities members who complain that they have never been included?

R: that one has ever happened. We as the committee we try to solve such issues.

I: when did this happen?

R: it happens many times, because community doesn’t fail to complain. Those who complain are the community members, they say “ us we never be taken into the mangroves to go and plant”. And the reason why they cannot be taken in a large group is because there is normally a small compensation. If somebody goes there, they get something small so that they can buy a bottle of drinking water and soap for wishing among others. Due to joblessness, if a small opportunity occurs everybody wants. If one person gets the other one who didn’t get complains. But we try. Nobody goes twice. If we give a chance to somebody next time we give to another chance.

I: how can this issue to resolved?

R: my suggestion is, whenever these opportunities arise, we as makongeni committee members, we check which families have participated, which have not participated. And the we give opportunity to those who have never participated.

I: who makes decisions in this mp group?

R: this decision making first is made by the office, KMFRI, because they know at this season, we must nursery establishment based on their expertise and knowledge.

I: you have told me there is a programme that originates from ACES. Where does KMFRI come in to make decision again?

R: it is a different because I remember like May-June is the planting season because that is the rainy season. There is another period for monitoring.

I: who has that programme of activities?

R; it is with the coordinator, who coordinates between the community, MP, and all the other stakeholders like the aces, including report writing, coordinates issues of money etc. in every programmes, like that of planting, her work is to do monitoring so know how many have dried and how many have grown. This monitoring she also involves the people from KMFRI office and some members of mp, then she writes the report.

I: who makes decisions on a day to day basis.

R: it depends on what kind of decision making. For example, if it planting, that directive comes from above, office of KMFRI and us here we do it. KMFRI communicates with partners and ACES together with the coordinator and then then give us the information.

If it decision making concerning money that has been sent to mp, lets say makongeni have received a certain amount of money. It is us, who sits, and then after community have decided, we as the committee member take that information that makongeni community have decided this project. After that the office approves the project.

In the past, it was like decision making, the committee was given the opportunity to make decision with ssome limitation. We were told that money was coming a certain amount so if we are doing a project, the project was not supposed to go beyond a certain amount. So you we were limited in deciding in this area. At least this time things are abit different after a conflict that occurred.

I: tell me more about that conflict.

R: there was a meeting in titanic hotel. Where people wanted to know things about this money. Initially, we had a committee meeting down there and people really complained about this project saying that this money in this project is like it is not helping the community. because, there is a lot money that is coming to pay the coordinator than that which we are getting in the project. So later, the committee members made that meeting. They said. “if we are being told that we are getting a certain percentage….. and then”, this now they were calciualting, simple calculations, but it is like this was hidden. So they stayed there and calculated………..(interrupted)

I: and who were in that place calculating?

R: it was the chairman MP, and all the committee members. Also KMFRI and officers from social services. So they calculated and questioned “ why are we told that we get 32%, and the coordinator gets a certain percentage? Why is the coordinator’s money higher”? So they looked for the real original figure that was bringing that calculation and that is when they realized… oh… so what we have been getting is not 32% it is only 10% for all those years. It was from that time that was caused a lot of trouble in that meeting and nothing was resolved. No resolutions were arrived at because people were very angry and were causing trouble, because they had already discovered the real truth and they were bitter that “so there is money but these people have been taking us as fools”?.

Later on we were told that this year’s money and that of last year would be sent. The money now tallies well. The amount sent, as the 32% of the original figure it agrees. Then people started saying that they now want the money they have been denied for all those past years. So people started saying that information should be sent to Mark and he be told that money is needed by the community. the chairman told the coordinator to send those complains to Mark, because she is the one who have this direct contact to mark. That people want the money that they have been denied for all those years. And we were told that Mark said he doesn’t have that money. So the committee members felt helpless, and there is no place where now they could push these complains to, they were left to complain among themselves. So they were saying “he has said the money is not there, but we want know, this where was this money being sent or where was it going?, why then, we were being paid this amount and if it is carbon dioxide that was being sold we were told it is 32%, if that money is not there, where is it?”. So it remained that way. So people wanted ark himself to come so that he can sit down with the mp and discuss these issues.

Wh as the committee, we have realized these people have hidden agenda and we don’t know what they want. If the justice is to be achieved, this money for all those years need to be sent to the community. if it is that 32% of the original amount every year, it should be calculated so that we know every year how much money we were denied and this money to be sent to community.

I: are there processes that are not going on well and if they are rectified they will help the mp project to progress.

R: there is something I would like to talk about. It is about these issues of money and passing through MP account. There are people and projects that come here, they do their projects, and we are told that there is money that is being sent to the bank account of mp, and committee are not informed that there is money being sent into the account and what activities to be done with that money. And after this oney has been sent to the mp account, how will the mp group benefit because the account being used belong to them?

I: which are those people?

R: there is a project, that was an experiment belonging to Nguu, the money for this project was sent through the account of MP. We as the committee didn’t know that there was money that had been sent to the mp account. We came to learn about it when the signatories were required to sign so that some withdrawals could be made. The mp committee was not informed. The concern with the mp committee was why should this money pass through the account of mp and not any other and why were we not informed? We could not understand why our account was being used.

I: was there some fees that was paid to mp account so that the money could pass through there?

R: there was no fees paid.

I: what had decided that the money should pass through the mp account?

R: I don’t know.

I: rally? You cannot fail to know. Just tell me who decided the money to be sent to mp account.

R: it was the Gazi KMFRI office. It was the KMFRI office because those who come there to do projects, they pass through the KMFRI office.

I: what would you as committee want concerning such issues?

R:what we would like, if there is anybody who want to come to conduct a project in mp or in other KMFRI areas concerning marine, and they want money to be sent through mp account; one. we must be informed in advance, two, also we should know in which way the mp or the community will benefit from it. It should not be like somebody comes and does his own activities, benefits, and then he leaves, yet he has used the account of mp. If they want to do their activities let them use their own bank account to do their things as they want to do. But if anyone is coming through mp the community must be able to benefit.

I: now tell me about transparency.

R: transparency is another thing that need to be rectified. If there is no transparency, people have no faith. For example, on the side of how this money was being sent, community was not having the understanding that there was no transparency. It was sent being 10% and yet it was supposed to be 32%. Meaning there was no transparency here. It is something that has eroded community’s trust. Because at this time, when people sit they say, “us through this community of ours we have discovered that the money that was being sent to us was 10%, it is only now that we have tried that the money that is coming is 32%, and each village is getting at least ksh. 400,000.00 plus.

I: was this 32% rectified from up there from ACES and Mark?

R: it was rectified from the ACES and Mark. It is from there. After carbon dioxide is sold, there is now that sharing in percentages; that this group gets 32%, 10% goes here and like that.

Then another thing that can push the mp forward is in these projects that we are doing. Also those partners from up there, they try to look for more donors, and more grants to help push this project. Me I see the main source of the money is the mangrove trees, so people can try to improve more on planting, monitoring to continue being done well.

I: anything else you would like to add?

R: it is about the constitution of mp. It happened that the committee members didn’t know what was contained in the mp constitution. They were just there to be swayed by the wind that comes. They were just there like members, they didn’t know which rules were to be used when or where, or things that needed to be done and those that needed not to be done. So, in case a mistake occurred, they didn’t know whether it was right or wrong and didn’t know what the rules say about it. So it reached a point that they needed to know what this constitution talks about.

I: and who has been the custodian of the constitution?

R: I don’t know but I think it was being kept by the office of the KMFRI and the coordinator. Because I personally I asked the coordinator whether I could get a copy of that constitution since July 2020 when I joined the committee and I stayed for a very long period before getting it. It reached a point that I started requesting for that constitution daily. Until lastly, it emerged that after all the complains that we must, before this committee member leave the office, they be aware of what the constitution says. But the past committee that have been there for mp they don’t know what the constitution says and they too have never been given that constitution and they have never seen it. The current committee, nobody had that copy. Meaning people didn’t know what it says.

So it later a forum was organized so that people could be educated about the constitution.

The reason why I started requesting for the constitution, was because I could see like the pm chairman was not doing things the right way. And there were conflicts between him and the coordinator. That he was not giving an opportunity for the wo of them to work together. Because, if it was calling for meeting, according to the constitution, it the chairman who was supposed to call for them. They were supposed to discuss with the coordinator and finally the chairman is the one to call for a meeting.

I: before then what was happening?

R: before I joined, it was the coordinator who was calling for meetings. Because when the chairman was told to request for meeting, he could not respond. There was a cold war. So when I noted this, I needed to see what the constitution says. So I told the coordinator, to give me the copy of the constitution, so that I could be able to know how we could punish this chairman. If it removing him we remove him, according to the constitution.

So I was not able to get that constitution. It took a very long time until recently, when we were going for those seminars, in 9th of September 2021 that I got a copy of that constitution. We also went for a seminar on 14th October 2021.

I: Which seminar?

R: that seminar for being educated about constitution. That is when we proposed that we need to make amendments to the constitution.

I: were you given copies?

R: we were given copies. The old one not the one we have amended. We made amendments. And for those amendment, they were to type first, then a copy to go to social services, who will go through it again, then they certify, and then more copies to the committee and the mp group.

I: which issues needed amendments?

R: there was an article on co-ordinator. We wanted that the co-ordinator to come from families that live in Gazi bay where mangroves are found. So we added that article. Another article was about chairman, leadership and chairman, and penalties if somebody breaks these rules. For chairman, we proposed that if the chairman breaks the constitution and committee have no faith with him, there will be an opinion poll, and if 51% of the members have no faith with him, then that chairman will have to vacate the seat of chairman so that another election is conducted.

Another thing was that if a person was to become a committee member, that member must have a good reputation within the community. if one gets into criminal activities, then such a person will be removed from the committee. Or if one is convicted. There a number of them and they are many because people were proposing them and I have not yet read that amended constitution, if I had read I could be remembering all of them.

I: this new constitution is to be effective by when?

R: the amended constitution was to be ready be end of this month. We didn’t specify exact date.

I: did you address issues like what you talked about earlier, like money coming to mp account, office making certain decisions for the mp committee etc?

R: we didn’t address those issues.

I: did members feel like those are not very important issues?

R: they are issues, but they were not addressed at depth because we saw they are things that can be rectified later.

I: my questions are over, and thank you very much for your time and information.

R: ok.