



Leading the Change (LtC) Through Village Forest Governance Monitoring.

What is Leading the Change and Village Governance Monitoring?

Worldwide Fund for Nature (WWF) Tanzania in partnership with MJUMITA is implementing the five-year (2018-2022) programme named Leading the Change (LtC): Civil Society Rights and Environment. The programme's ultimate goal is that, by the year 2022, people in Ruvuma-Selous Landscape are effectively controlling decisions and receiving full benefits from natural resources and exercising their rights for ensuring that the ecological integrity is sustainably managed and use of sustainable, clean and affordable renewable energy is increased. MJUMITA is participating in LtC project with an objective to contribute to improving governance of the forest management institutions in villages served by the programme.

Governance Monitoring and Financial Auditing in CBFM villages is one of the main approaches applied to promote compliance with governance best practices, such as transparency, accountability, participation, and rule of law in management of the village forest and financial resources. The monitoring tool assesses and promotes a sum of 12 governance factors as follows:

1. Compliance to village forest bylaws and village forest management plans

- ❖ Availability of sufficient number of copies of approved village forest bylaws and village forest management plans.
- ❖ Monthly and quarterly Meeting minutes indicating discussion around village forest bylaws and village forest management plans.
- ❖ Certificate of pleading guilty for the people who were punished under forest bylaws and village forest management plans to ascertain whether the punishments are administered in accordance to the laws.

2. Participatory Planning and budgeting

- ❖ Availability of well filled timely approved, complete annual plans and budgets for Village Natural resource Committees (VNRCs) and Village Councils (VCs)
- ❖ Availability of sub-village meeting minutes indicating existence of participatory actions for developing village annual plans and budgets
- ❖ Evidence for participation of technical expertise in developing village annual plans and budgets.

3. Proportion of legal meetings conducted

- ❖ Availability of complete and comprehensive meeting minutes for monthly VNRC, VCs, the 3 VC standing committees, sub-villages and

quarterly generally assemblies. Meetings should have clear agenda on village forest management and related financial reports, and they should be conducted consistently with clear calendar.

4. Management of revenues

- ❖ Availability of precise registry of VNRC and VC receipt books
- ❖ Proportion of VNRC and VC revenues clearly accounted for in through receipt books
- ❖ Proportion of VNRC and VC revenues collected and banked.

5. Management of the village forest trade

- ❖ Availability of complete accounting books for sustainable harvesting of forest produce
- ❖ Availability of the approved sustainable harvesting plans for forest produce in the VLFR
- ❖ Availability of complete application documents for traders who were approved by District Harvesting Committee to harvest in the VLFR
- ❖ Availability of meeting minutes for approval of the traders
- ❖ Well written license, and permit books for sustainable harvesting in the VLFR.
- ❖ Well, monitored and documented harvesting processes.

6. Expenditure Management

- ❖ Proportion of VNRC and VC expenditures with complete meeting minutes for approval
- ❖ Proportion of VNRC and VC expenditures on procurements with complete approval process
- ❖ Proportion of the VNRC's payments enclosed with complete payment vouchers
- ❖ Proportion of the VNRC and VC expenditures enclosed with complete supporting documents (invoices, delivery notes, electronic receipts);
- ❖ Proportion of VNRC expenditure approved and used in accordance with the annual budget
- ❖ Consistence and completeness of filing expenditure documents in the VNRC and VC office.

7. Financial accounting books

- ❖ Proportion of complete monthly cash analysis books prepared on time for VNRCs and VCs
- ❖ Presence of dully prepared quarterly statement of bank reconciliation for VNRCs and VCs.

8. Management of Village assets

- ❖ Proportion of assets/equipment procured for VNRCs and VCs enclosed with complete receipt vouchers;
- ❖ Proportion of assets/equipment used for VNRCs and VCs enclosed with complete issued vouchers
- ❖ Proportion of assets/equipment procured and used for VNRCs and VCs enclosed well recorded in store ledger
- ❖ Proportion of village assets with complete annual fixed asset registry and analysis.

9. Debtors and creditors' books

- ❖ Proportional of VNRC and VC debtors and creditors well documented in the respective books.

10. Preparation of monthly and quarterly financial reports

- ❖ Proportion of complete quarterly and monthly VNRCs and VCs revenue and expenditure reports
- ❖ Proportion of complete quarterly VNRCs and VCs store reports
- ❖ Proportion of complete annual VNRCs and VCs store reports
- ❖ Proportion of complete quarterly debtors and creditors VNRC and VC reports.

11. Implementation of annual plan

- ❖ Proportion of VNRCs and VCs revenues collected Vs budgeted
- ❖ Proportion of VNRCs and VCs, expenditures Vs budgeted
- ❖ Proportion of the VNRCs patrols conducted Vs required
- ❖ Availability of quarterly implementation reports for VNRCs and VCs.

12. Other Transparency and accountability issues

- ❖ Proportion of complete monthly and quarterly reports posted on the village notice board
- ❖ Proportion of community recommendations in meetings and through suggestion box which were responded to by village leaders
- ❖ Proportion of previous governance and audit issues that were resolved
- ❖ Proportion of auditor's recommendations which were taken into consideration.

Why did we focus on Village Governance Monitoring and Financial Auditing?

There were increasing governance shortfalls in village forest management institutions. Inadequacy of accountability, and transparency as well as skills shortages among VC and VNRC members resulting into their occasional turnover was reported among the governance problems in CBFM. An initial project survey in 2017 revealed that in many cases, VNRCs and VCs do not produce complete and accountable reports. Often, they were not consistently reporting to communities. As a result, village general assemblies were making un-informed decisions, including termination of VNRCs and sometimes VCs without collective evidence. This has been resulting into the erosion of skills and knowledge provided to VNRCs and VCs by CBFM stakeholders during the establishment process thereby undermining VLFM management. Besides, many CBFM governance problems especially those related to the management of financial resources were being raised by communities in the political arena. This contributed to claims from the government that CBFM enterprises are not working resulting into recentralization movements in 2017 and 2018. MJUMITA and CBFM stakeholders through LtC project initiated an independent and consistency governance monitoring framework in CBFM villages that would enable communities to identify and resolve governance issues objectively. The action will promote Human Right Based Approach (HRBA) that will ensure women participation, good governance and sustainability of natural resource management, as well as village governance evaluators. The village governance evaluators are community men and women established through local MJUMITA networks and approved.

Who implements governance Monitoring and Financial auditing?

The governance monitoring and financial auditing in CBFM villages are designed to be administered by an independent team comprising of the District Internal Auditor and at least 1 MJUMITA technical staff as well as Village Governance Evaluators established through local MJUMITA networks and approved by the village general assembly. Under the Leading the Change programme, MJUMITA facilitated the establishment and trained a sum of 88 (44 women and 44 men) village governance evaluators and we consistently worked with 17 district officials;- (4 Namtumbo, 4 Tunduru, 5 Kilwa and 4 Rufiji districts).

Where the governance Monitoring and Financial Auditing conducted?

The initiative has been implemented in 22 villages in 4 districts (Rufiji 3, Kilwa 10, Tunduru 7; Namtumbo 2), with at least 240,810 ha of forest cover. It involved 10 local MJUMITA networks (CBOs). The total number of beneficiaries is estimated to include 12,643 households comprising about 70,507 people including 38,621 women and 31,886 Men.

When the governance Monitoring and Financial Auditing conducted?

Monitoring activities were administered every year starting from 2018 to 2022, usually between August and October and it covers the period of 12 months counted from July to June (the previous fiscal year).

How is governance Monitoring being implemented?

The process starts with the establishment of a team of at least 4 village governance evaluators (2 men and 2 women) through the local MJUMITA network meetings and approved by the village general assemblies. To make them independent, evaluators should not be among the VNRC or VC members, and should come from different families and sub-villages. The evaluators are trained to provide them with the knowledge and skill to participate in village annual auditing and governance assessment, understand and analyses audit and governance issues and related recommendations, and monitor transparency and accountability through participation in the quarterly village meetings and review of regular reports posted on the notice boards. Evaluators are provided with guidelines for the operationalization of their daily activities.



Awareness rising for sustained audit and governance monitoring via Village Assembly Meeting at Likawage village – Kilwa District in 2022

The governance assessment meeting is formally convened through an official letter from the District Executive Director instructing the Village Executive Officer to prepare the relevant documents and inform the participants accordingly. VEO is also asked to inform all community members about the assessment through

village meetings and notice boards. The assessment meeting involves the leaders of VNRC, village council and governance evaluators. The district internal auditor leads the assessment process, and the main focus is usually the verification of village documents. The auditing/monitoring process seeks to establish issues against the best practices, the reason for the problem and recommendations. Issues are compiled to produce the first draft of a detailed governance monitoring and audit report for the individual village. Village leaders are given 14 to 28 days to respond to the issues, by providing the missing evidence. The evaluation team analyzes the response whereby issues that are found to have been resolved are closed and the pending ones are carried forward. The team then convene a VC and VNRC meeting, followed by a village general assembly for presenting the report. In each meeting, village leaders provide recommendations and commitments to resolve the identified issues. Then the team prepares a summary report for each district and convenes a meeting with senior officials to present the issues and seek their recommendations, commitment, and actions. The evaluation team conducts regular monitoring to ascertain the extent of resolutions of the identified issues and develop a position of incorporating serious issues in the local MJUMITA network's advocacy agenda to influence change. Besides, the monitoring tool provides the evaluation team with guidance to provide governance scores per every aspect of analysis to demonstrate each village's performance.



Auditing and governance monitoring proceedings at Kikole village – Kilwa District in 2020

Finally, a multidisciplinary governance analysis for the CBFM villages has been administered to the same villages to ascertain stakeholder opinion in each governance aspect. In this aspect, the Site Level Assessment of Governance and Equity (SAGE) data entry and analysis tool was applied. Groups of local government officials, MJUMITA staff, women, men, village council, and village natural resource committee were engaged to undertake the analysis by voting against a series of issues presented in the tool through FGD.



Site-Level Assessment of Governance and Equity (SAGE) voting through Focus Group Discussion (FGD in Kilwa District in December 2022).

What has been the governance monitoring and financial auditing results in the 22 villages?

Through the application of SAGE, the analysis of governance principles shows an increase in the mean governance scores in the year 2022 as compared to the year 2018 before the project implementation as shown below (table 1, figure 1, figure 2 and figure 3).

Table 1: Comparison of mean governance principles before (2018) and after (2022) project implementation

Governance principles	SAGE: Mean governance score (2018)	SAGE: Mean governance score (2022)	Improvement (%)
Respect for rights	0.62	1.78	65
Respect for actors	0.8	1.8	56
Participation in decision making	0.78	1.75	55
Transparency and accountability	0.72	1.56	54
Dispute resolution	0.11	1.21	90
Fair law enforcement	0.78	1.76	56
Negative Impact mitigation	0.15	1.39	89
Equitable benefit sharing	0.9	1.59	43

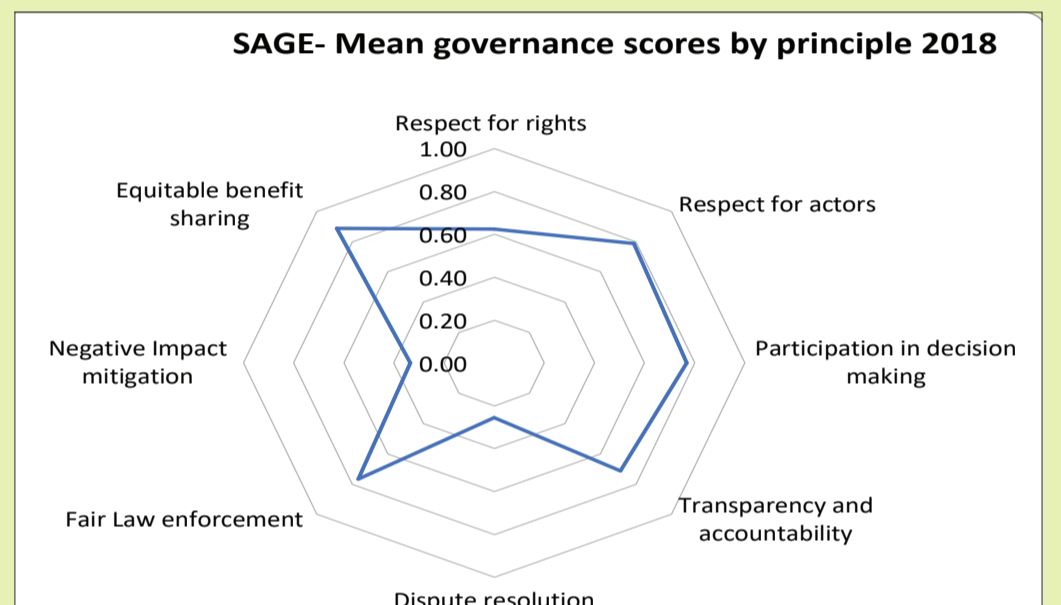


Figure 1: Mean governance scores by principle in 2018

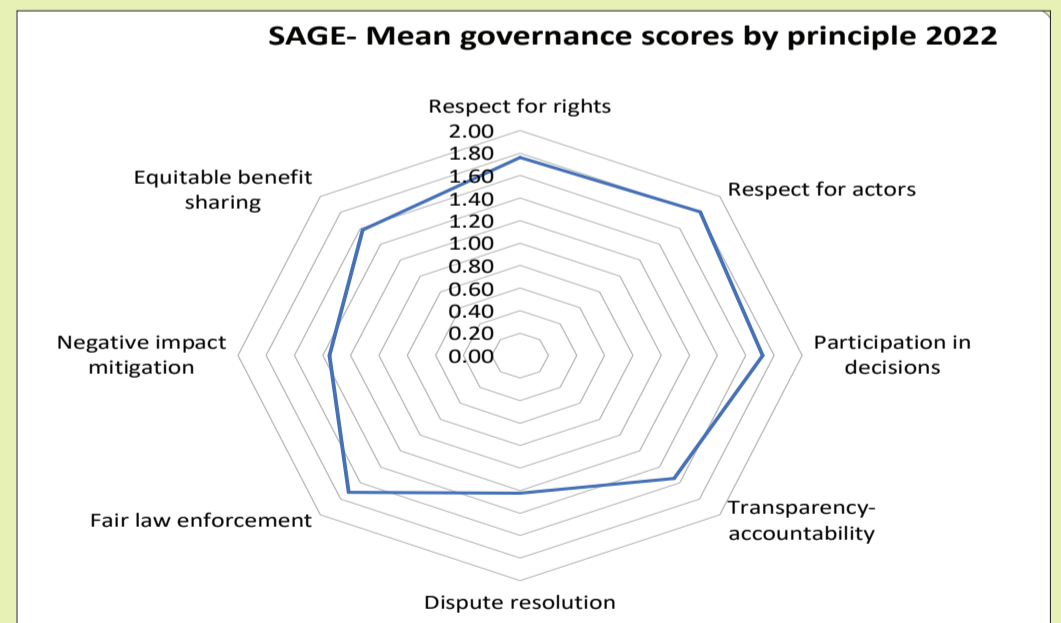


Figure 2: Mean governance scores by principle 2022

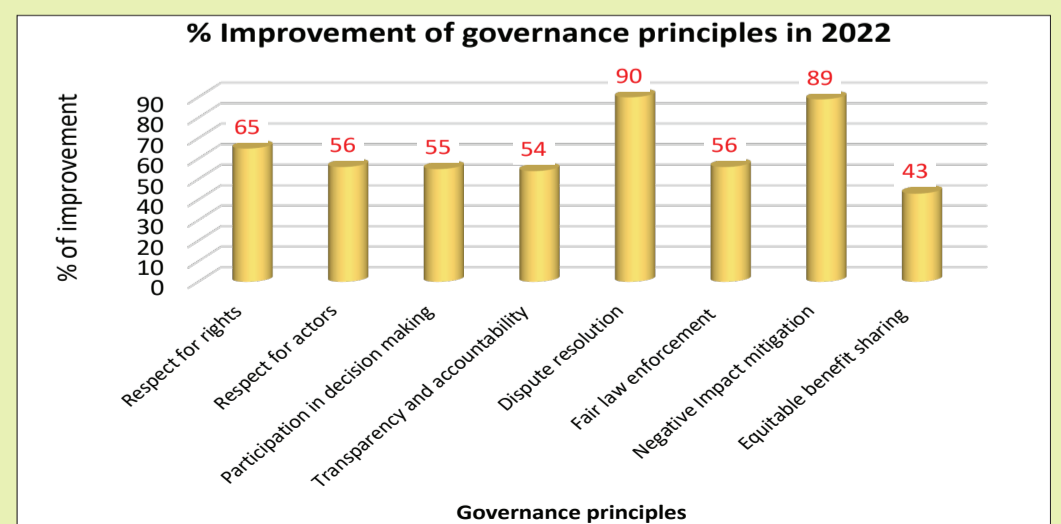


Figure 3: Percentage improvement of governance principles in 2022.

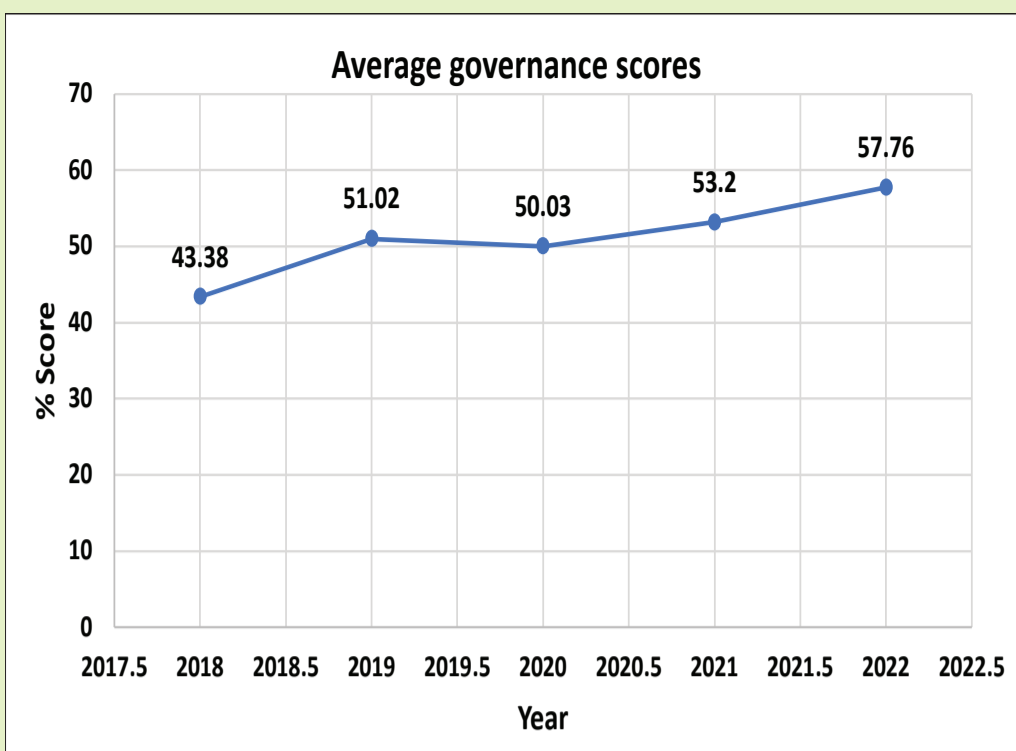


Figure 4: Average governance scores for 22 villages across four years (2018/19 – 2021/22) of financial auditing and governance monitoring

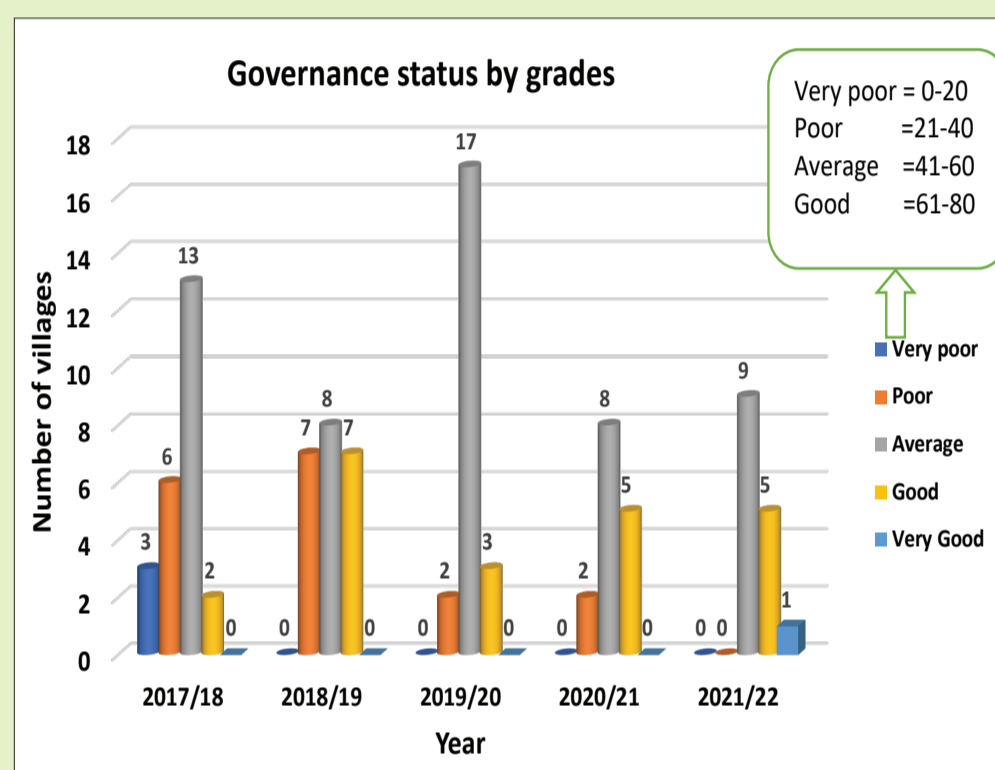


Figure 5: Comparison of individual village governance status by grades across four years of financial audit and governance monitoring

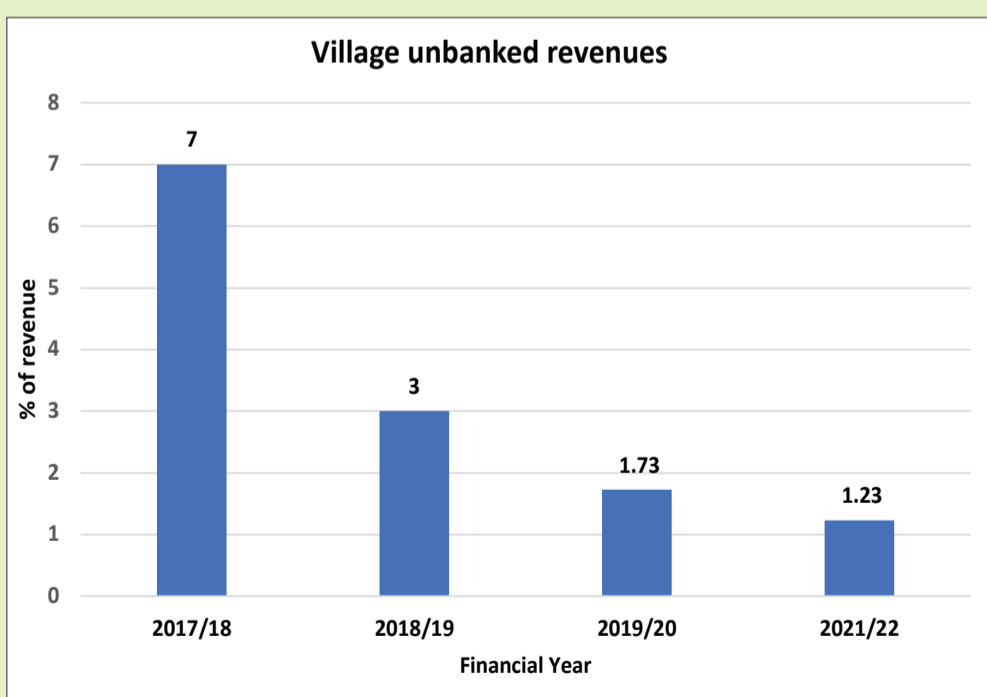


Figure 6: Comparison of revenues unbanked across 5 years of project implementation in 22 CBFM villages

Based on village forest governance monitoring and financial audit across five years of project implementation in 22 CBFM villages, the analysis shows a progressive increase in an overall governance score from 43.38 (Grade C – average) in the 2018/19 Fiscal Year (FY) to 57.76 (average – grade C) in 2021/22 FY which is equivalent to an increase of 14.38% scores as shown in figure 3. In addition to that, it has been observed that the trend of internal control of village forest management institutions become improved (best practices). For example, the trend of village revenues being not banked decreased from 7% in 2018/19 FY to 1.23% in 2021/22 FY as indicated in figure 4.

Furthermore, individual village performances have improved across auditing years as a result of regular capacity building on governance and financial management best practices. This is evidenced by the number of villages scoring very poor decreased from three in 2017/18 FY to Zero in 2018 up to 2022. Also, the number of villages scoring grade A started to appear (1 village in 2021/22 FY) as compared to Zero (2017/18 – 2020/21 FY). Likewise, the number of villages scoring grade D (Poor) has decreased to Zero in 2021/22 FY as shown in the figure 4.



VNRC chairperson and secretary for Nyamwage village in Rufiji showing their well-filled accounting books after capacity building by MJUMITA on village governance and financial management.



Improved governance (income and expenditure transparency) at Nyamwage village based in Rufiji as a result of continued capacity building of village forest management institution leaders by MJUMITA on village financial accounting.



Sweden
Sverige

Leading the Change (LtC) in the Village Governance Actions

MJUMITA @2022

CONTACTS

Old Bagamoyo Road, Plot 323, Msasani village
P.O. Box 21522, Dar es Salaam, Tanzania
Tel: +255 784 416 063
Email: info@mjumita.or.tz