

# Forest management by the Nyangole community and Uganda Forestry Department

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## SUMMARY

If it has not been well planned for, population growth can result in resource use conflicts. However, if the involved parties are fully aware of the advantages, collaborative management can avert such conflicts. A living example is the Nyangole community, near Tororo Forest Reserve in the peri-urban area of Tororo Municipality in Uganda. When the Forestry Department started planting Tororo Forest Reserve with *Eucalyptus*, it met stiff resistance from the Nyangole community. The community wanted the forest land for agriculture and settlement and for poles and fuelwood from the natural tree species. Although it was unlawful to settle, cultivate, graze and cut trees in a forest reserve, the law was not strictly applied until the planting began. Strict application of the law resulted in more friction between the Forestry Department staff and the community. More and more planted seedlings were deliberately destroyed by the community and their domestic animals. It became apparent that unless there was collaborative management between the Forestry Department and the community, the afforestation programme would fail. The Forestry Department entered an agreement with the Nyangole community, with the objectives of ensuring that the plantation is established in a sustainable and profitable manner; of supplying, poles and fuelwood for domestic demand; of contributing to Tororo urban wood demand; of providing income-generating opportunities to the community; and of earning revenue for local government through the sales of the plantation products. The families were allocated plots for raising trees and subsistence crops. They now feel that they are responsible for the management of the plantation. Collaborative management has yielded good results within a short period. It has resulted in better plantation management, a better working relationship between the Forestry Department staff and the community, and improved forestry services.

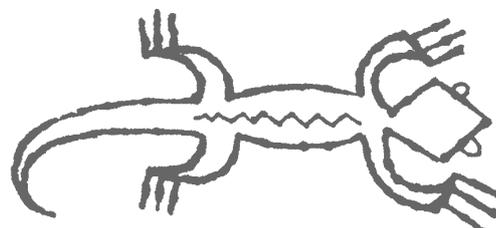
## Identification of the case

The case was conducted in the Tororo District in Tororo Central Forest Reserve, Uganda. The reserve surrounds Tororo Town, which is growing rapidly and which borders Kenya in the west. The author is a senior forest officer with more than 22 years of forestry field experience.

## Status of the forest resources

There are 4.9 million ha of forests and woodlands in Uganda, and they cover 24 percent of the land area. Woodlands make up 81 percent of the forest area, 19 percent is tropical high forests and less than 1 percent is plantation (see Table 1). More than 35 percent of

the resource is now degraded. The main causes of forest degradation are the clearing of forests for agriculture, overharvesting for charcoal and wood production, encroachment, and degazetting of forest reserves by government for other purposes, such as industrial growth and urbanization. Construction timber, fuelwood, poles and charcoal are the major products.<sup>1</sup> They are marketed locally in urban areas. Uganda's population growth is estimated at 2.5 percent per year. To mitigate these trends, government uses both the policing approach, i.e. applying the Forest Act, and sensitization of the public to the value of forest conservation.



1. Uganda Forestry Policy 2001, p. 2.

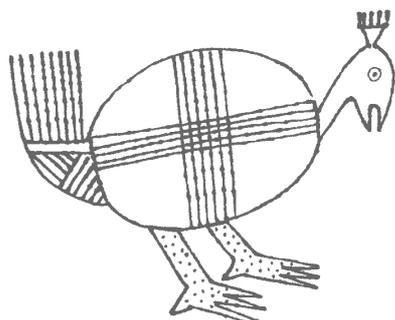
**TABLE 1 • Approximate areas (ha) of forest and woodland under various categories of ownership and management, Uganda**

|                      | GOVERNMENT LAND   |                                      | PRIVATE AND CUSTOMARY LAND | TOTAL             |
|----------------------|---|--------------------------------------|----------------------------|-------------------|
|                      | CENTRAL AND LOCAL FOREST RESERVES (FORESTRY DEPARTMENT AND LOCAL AUTHORITY) | NATIONAL PARKS AND WILDLIFE RESERVES |                            |                   |
| Tropical high forest | 306 000   | 267 000                              | 351 000                    | 924 000           |
| Woodland             | 411 000   | 462 000                              | 3 102 000                  | 3 975 000         |
| Plantation           | 20 000  | 2 000                                | 11 000                     | 33 000            |
| <b>Total forest</b>  | <b>737 000</b>  | <b>731 000</b>                       | <b>3 464 000</b>           | <b>4 932 000</b>  |
| Other cover types    | 414 000   | 1 167 000                            | 13 901 000                 | 15 482 000        |
| <b>Total land</b>    | <b>1 151 000</b>  | <b>1 898 000</b>                     | <b>17 365 000</b>          | <b>20 414 000</b> |

Source: Forestry Department. 1999. National Biomass Study.

## The participatory forestry process

When the Forestry Department started planting Tororo Reserve with *Eucalyptus* a few years ago, it was confronted with a hostile response from encroachers in the neighbouring communities. It became clear that management would be difficult unless these communities were involved. The participatory approach was tried early in 1999, and an agreement was signed on 22 January 2000 that spelled out each party's role and the working conditions and duration of the lease. "Collaborative forestry management means that communities are genuinely involved in the management of the forest resource through a negotiated process in which rights, roles, responsibilities and returns for the sustainable management of such forest resources are shared."<sup>2</sup>



## The main incentives

The main incentives include:

- obtaining access to forestry land for the community to plant their own short-term crops;
- planting by the community of its own trees for domestic and commercial purposes, to improve household incomes;<sup>3</sup>
- improving the working relationship between Forestry Department staff and the community (both parties were wasting useful time in courts of law and prisons to resolve management issues);
- reducing costs, as it would be cheaper for the Forestry Department to manage the resource.

The Forestry Department and the community executive committee are responsible for decision-making, and individuals are responsible for implementation and resource use.

The Department is satisfied with the improved relationship and assistance in resource management. The private sector has had no influence in participatory forestry implementation. The institutional

2. Glossary of Uganda Forestry Policy 2001.

3. This is in line with No. 2.3 of the Guiding Principles for the Forest Sector, Uganda Forestry Policy 2001, p. 13: "Livelihoods and poverty: the improvement of livelihoods should be a major goal in all the strategies and actions for the development of the forest sector so as to contribute to poverty eradication."

changes include setting up the executive committee representing the community's interests and working jointly with the Forestry Department to manage the resource. The head office of the Forestry Department now monitors and evaluates progress.

### The main obstacles

The main obstacles to participatory management included:

- earlier encroachers' resistance to relinquishing the land that they had encroached for the benefit of the entire community;
- some individuals' resistance to harvesting their planted crops to make enough room for the planted trees;
- failure of some community members to follow technical advice and the silvicultural timetable;
- destruction of young trees by domestic animals and termites.

### The impact of participatory forestry on rural livelihoods

The communities have benefited from the sales of tree seedlings, poles and crops cultivated on plots when trees are still young, and they have acquired both managerial and silvicultural skills. They have saved income that they would otherwise have spent on fuelwood and domestic poles. Members of the community who were redundant are now employed in tree growing.

Expected barriers include increasing the local market dues imposed by local authorities on forest produce to increase their tax base. Villagers will always have access to the market through market information flow.

The utilization of forest products is sustainable for the following reasons:

- There is a signed agreement between government and the community; the land lease has a duration of 49 years and is reviewed every five years.
- Individuals benefit directly from their woodlots.
- Beginning with the second planting, individuals will pay the government 1 000 Uganda shillings/month/ha; this will be a source for revenue for the central government.
- The market is assured even in the future because there will be no cheaper alternatives for wood in the near future, and the population continues to grow steadily.

### The impact of participatory forestry on conservation and management of forests

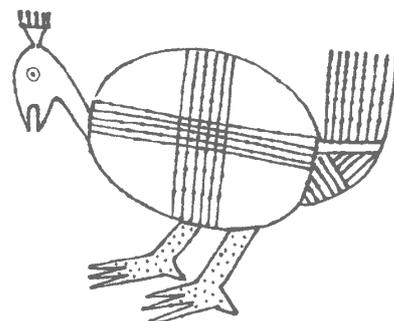
Participatory forestry has attained the following achievements:

- Tree planting is succeeding to a greater extent than before.
- The forest is no longer illegally encroached.
- There is harmony between Forestry Department staff and the neighbouring communities.
- The community has acquired management and silvicultural skills.
- The communities now manage the resource jointly with Forestry Department staff.
- Individuals now feel a sense of ownership of the resource.
- There is an improved working relationship among members of the community.
- It has become cheaper to manage the forest resource.

In order to enhance sustainability, in addition to the agreement between the community and the Forestry Department individual members also sign agreements for the plots allocated to them. The community elects its steering committee and makes its own rules and regulations. Furthermore, the National Forests Act still serves as an umbrella to ensure that the management is within the law.

### Participatory forestry beyond local initiatives

Participatory forestry is generally a new concept in Uganda. It seems to be more successful in plantations than in natural high forests. The scaling-up of participatory forestry may not be possible because of a lack of forestry supervisory staff in the field, and the concept may therefore be abused.



## Recommendations for the promotion of participatory forestry

The main lessons learned are that the following factors can promote participatory forestry:

- an improved relationship between neighbouring communities and the Forestry Department field staff;
- better and cheaper forestry resource management;
- improved extension service;
- improved community household incomes.

Participatory forestry could be spread gradually as the population appreciates its advantage.

To effect participatory forestry, it is necessary to have:

- forest land;
- a demand for forestry products and access to markets;
- suitable tree species, in case of plantation;
- a good working relationship between the communities and Forestry Department staff.

Other necessary criteria for collaborative forest management (CFM)<sup>4</sup> include the following:

- CFM is an approach towards forest management and therefore must be implemented by those with responsibility for management, i.e. Forestry Department staff.
- Sustainable forest management must be the major objective.
- There must be a genuine commitment to sharing responsibility and authority on the part of the Forestry Department.

- CFM must be seen as a process, and it is the process rather than the output that is important.
- There must be real and complete participation of both partners from the beginning.
- CFM must be approached with flexibility and should be considered a learning approach.
- CFM must be a two-way capacity-building process.
- With CFM, it is necessary to take time; “rapid” never means “participatory”.
- CFM must result in a fair deal for all parties.
- When implementing CFM, flexibility is the key, particularly flexibility about the nature of the agreement.
- CFM must result in fair distribution of benefits within the community.
- CFM must address the real issues; ignoring the difficult issues will not make them go away.
- The responsibilities agreed through CFM must be appropriate.
- CFM must offer long-term security for benefits if the Forestry Department expects the community to take a long-term perspective of their responsibilities.
- There must be effective and appropriate representation when implementing CFM.
- CFM agreements must be reached through consensus.
- When implementing CFM, Forestry Department staff must adapt to the people.
- CFM must be seen as a learning experience; the experiences must be well documented and the lessons learned.

4. First training workshop on collaborative forest management for field staff of the Uganda Forest Department, 20 to 25 July 1998, Nyabyeya Forestry College.