

## Efficacy of Forestry Conservation Policy on Rural Livelihoods in Uganda: Evidence from Mabira Forest Reserve

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**Abstract:** A study was conducted from 2005-2007 in areas around Mabira Forest Reserve, Central Uganda. The objectives were to assess: awareness of the local communities about the current Forest Policy in Uganda, the local communities' opinions about the efficacy of the current Forest Policy, and the capacity in terms of training to manage forest resources by local communities. Fifty-two households from 4 villages were interviewed in Najjembe sub-county in Mukono district that surrounding Mabira Forest Reserve. Questions were pre-determined and interviews guided. Individuals were interviewed for about 30-60 min. Primary data were subjected to content analysis, coded and subsequently analysed using Statistical Package for Social Scientist (SPSS). About 78% of the respondents were aware of the current Forest Policy in Uganda. About 59% of the respondents said that utilization and socio-economic benefits is strongly supported by the Forest Policy. Half of the respondents disagree that local people have more access to forest products than before under the current Forest Policy. About the same number of the respondents disagree that the forest and tree cover has increased under the present Forest Policy. Capacity to manage forest resources by local communities was weak, majority of the respondents said that none of their household members had received any of training in natural and or plantation forest management. Many institutions including National Forestry Authority (NFA), National Environment Management Authority, Uganda Wildlife Authority (UWA), Local Governments and Civil Society Organizations were reportedly playing key roles in conservation and management of the forest. There is a need for campaigns in order to realign policies that allows for full participation of not only the government but also the local communities in forest conservation and management.

**Key words:** Forest policy, rural livelihoods, conservation, management, Uganda

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### INTRODUCTION

Forest policy in Uganda has a long history dating back to 1929. Four revisions were made in 1948, 1970, 1987 and 2001. The revisions reflected the distinct changes in the perceived role of forestry in Uganda as the country has developed. The first policy of 1929 was developed at a time when the colonial state was seeking to gain formal control over much of the land. The main justification for scheduling forest reserves was to ensure important water catchments were protected. This was a far-sighted policy in that it looked a head of a time when those water catchments might be threatened by increasing agriculture. Timber production forests were also gazetted.

By the time of the first formal revision of the policy in 1948, Uganda was beginning to change more rapidly:

there was growth in population and more awareness of the importance of national economic development in the post-war era. In addition to emphasis on retaining forests for their climatic and other indirect values, the 1948 policy stressed the need to foster among the people of Uganda a real understanding of the value of forests, the need for an effective extension and the need to acquire more land for planting new forests. Under this policy, some national forest reserves were converted to plantation, in others logging intensified, sawmills flourished and above all original refinement and other technical approaches to silviculture were encouraged. Indeed, this was a reflection of the realization of forests for economic development. Other national forests were cleared for agriculture development, in the belief that this was a higher priority land-use than forestry in some well-wooded areas. The size of the forest estate

was to be limited to the minimum area necessary for the achievement of the primary objective of management for purposes of availing 'enough' land for agriculture (Kamugisha, 1993).

Although there was no scientifically objective method of determining the size of a 'minimum area', a minimum area was calculated for each administrative district at the time. In practice, when the area of gazetted forest reached or exceeded an amount calculated on the basis of wood consumption per head, the size of the population, production capacity and land pressure in a given district, then the district would be declared 'adequately forested' irrespective of whether there were ungazetted forests in the district or not (Kamugisha, 1993). Although some people argue that the 1948 policy gave relatively little emphasis to value conservation (Grove, 1998), one could argue that by placing emphasis on the value of forests, even those conservation values were embedded in the policy. What could have lacked is a clear interpretation of forest values, and translating them in forest management options. A second revision of the forest policy was made in 1970. However, it maintained the main provisions of the 1948 policy except that it added a provision for efficient conversion of wood and wood products.

A third revision came in 1988. With it came new dimensions. For the first time, the policy emphasized the need to conserve biodiversity and rare species, and also emphasized the need for more active protection of forest resources, for research in silviculture and tourism, for promotion of agro forestry, and an overall emphasis on environmentally sustainable forestry. The policy was used by Forest Department to arrive at the basis for managing forests. Twenty percent of all natural forests were to be turned into 'strict nature reserves' in which no human activity was permitted except walking and scientific studies. Thirty percent was to be become 'buffer zone' with 'limited' forest harvesting being permitted, and the remaining 50% was to be left for management for sustainable utilization. These proportions however, applied only to forests that were managed by Forest Department and the management options did not consider forests on private landholdings.

In 2001, the government approved a new forest policy that was made in a participatory manner than the previous ones. Its goal is 'an integrated forest sector that activates sustainable increases in the economic, social and environmental benefits from forests and trees by all the people of Uganda, especially the poor and vulnerable. Policy statements are made along the following headings, which in turn are followed by specific strategies. The new policy institutionalizes community forestry and addresses the concern of forests on private land. The objective of this study was assess to: (i) the awareness of the local

communities about the current Forest Policy (2001) in Uganda (ii) the local communities' opinions about the efficacy of the current Forest Policy and (iii) the capacity in terms of training to manage forest resources by local communities. It is expected that this study will be of great importance in terms of realigning policies in a direction that allows for full participation of not only the government but also communities in forest management.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

**Study Area:** The study was based on the survey carried out among local communities living adjacent to Mabira Forest Reserve, Mukono district. Mabira Forest Reserve is the largest block of moist semi-deciduous forest remaining in the central region of Uganda (Carswell, 1986). The reserve is considered to be a secondary forest, in which the distinct vegetation types are sub-climax communities, heavily influenced by humans for prolonged periods of time. There are two peaks of rainfall: March-May and September-November with mean annual rainfall of 1200-1500 mm, and temperatures that rarely exceed 28 °C. The reserve occupies gently undulating country characterized by numerous flat-topped hills and wide shallow valleys. Some of these valleys have papyrus swamps. The topography is such that the land drains to the north even though the reserve's southern boundary lies only 13 km from the shores of Lake Victoria. The reserve is isolated from other protected areas by settled agricultural land and Scoul sugarcane plantation. Its boundary is demarcated with numbered concrete posts at the corners as well as direction trenches and cairns. Commercial use began when some parts were harvested in the early 1900s, and until 1988, intensive coffee/banana agricultural encroachment badly damaged large parts of the reserve (Howard, 1991). About 21% and 26% of the reserve have been designated as Strict Nature Reserve and Buffer Zone respectively, and forest in these areas is currently recovering, helped by extensive plantings of native tree species.

**Methods:** Data were collected from four villages selected from Najjembe sub-county in Mukono district due to their relative proximity to Mabira Forest Reserve and the presence of a variety of stakeholders operating within the villages. A total of 52 semi-structured questionnaires were used to gather the data. Certain 'core' questions were pre-determined and the interviews were guided as to ensure that those questions were answered. However, new questions, or lines of questioning, were allowed to develop depending on the answers received. Interviews were

carried out on a one by one basis. Each session took 30 minutes to 1 hour depending on the answers given. Primary data were subjected to thorough content analysis and coded before subsequently analysis using Statistical Package for Social Scientist (SPSS).

## RESULTS

### Socioeconomic characteristics of the respondents:

Majority (53%) of the respondents were aged between 26 to 50 years (Table 1). Most (55%) households had relatively smaller family size of 1 to 5 persons. More than half of had respondents were male and 54% were married. Sixty eight percent were subsistence farmers. Most (67%) respondent had not gone beyond primary level of education. About % 79% owned land and 61% had plot sizes ranging between 1-5 acres. Majority (45%) of the household had annual income ranging from Uganda shilling 251000 - 500000. Most (66%) respondents lived in semi-permanent houses reared. About 52 and 74% lived a distance of less than 1 km from forest reserve and 4 km from the nearest market respectively.

### Land tenure and local communities rights to land and tree resources:

Many (92%) of the respondents had access to forest reserve, individually owned land (88%), wetlands (83%) and private land (neighbours) (35%). Access to individually owned land was acquired mainly by inheritance (47%) and buying the land (41%). Majority of people acquired these accesses between 1961 and 1990 (Table 2). Access to private land (neighbours) was mainly by permission from the owner (66%). About 8% said they acquired access by renting. The rest (28%) acquired access without permission. Many respondents said they started accessing forest reserve (79%) and wetland (87%) freely without permission in the periods of 1971 to 1980.

Asked whether some land they have access to have formal deed, majority (79%) said they do not have the formal deed to the individually owned land. Majority of them also said they do not know whether private land (neighbours), forest reserves and wetlands to which they have access to have formal title deeds. The entire respondent who claimed to have access to forest reserve, wetlands and private land (neighbour) said they do not have right to give out these lands or to sell them. For individually owned land, large number of respondents, 45% and 40% respectively reported that they have right to give out their land or sell them with permission from their spouses. About 29 and 33% of the respondents said they do not seek permission from body in case they want to give out or sell their land.

Table 1: Socio-economic characteristics of the respondents

Factor	(%)	Factor	(%)
<b>Age</b>		<b>Family size (persons)</b>	
<25	22	1-5	55
26-50	53	6-10	39
>50	25	>10	6
<b>Sex</b>		<b>Land ownership</b>	
Male	59	Own land	79
Female	41	Do not own land	21
<b>Marital status</b>		<b>Plot/land size (acre)</b>	
Single	20	1-5	61
Married	54	6-10	22
Divorced	8	>10	17
Separated	6		
Widowed	12		
<b>Current occupation</b>		<b>Annual income (Ug.Shs.)</b>	
Farming	68	<250,000	12
Civil servant worker (councilors, teachers)	6	251,000-500,000	45
Business	10	501,000-1,000,000	33
Others (Tailoring, charcoal burning, bodaboda cyclist)	16	>1,000,000	10
<b>Educational background</b>		<b>Type of housing</b>	
No formal education	22	Permanent	38
Primary	45	Semi-permanent	66
Secondary	23	Grass thatched	24
College	9		
University	1		
<b>Distance of the home to nearest market (Km)</b>		<b>Distance of the home to forest reserve (Km)</b>	
<2	24	< 1	52
2-4	46	1-2	28
>4	30	>2	20

The rights to plant and cut tree varied by the type of the land household had access to. Many respondents said they don't need any permission from anybody to either plant or cut trees from the lands they individually owned. Contrary to this, 65% of the people interviewed said they have to seek permission from landlord before cutting trees from private land (neighbour). About 56% of the people do not have right to plant trees on this land (neighbours). Majority respondents also reported that they have rights to cut trees either from forests or wetlands without anybody's permission. Similarly, a large number of people said they need to ask permission from NFA or local authority respectively to before planting trees in forest reserve or wetlands.

### Local communities' opinions and awareness about forest policy in Uganda:

About 78% of the respondents were aware of the current Forest Policy in Uganda and generally 84% think the Forest Policy addresses forest conservation issues in Uganda (Table 3). The sources of awareness included National Forestry Authority, Civil Society Organisations, media, workshops/seminars as well as Forestry Resources and Research Institute (FORRI).

Asked specifically about their opinions on the efficacy of the current Forest Policy in Uganda,

Table 2: Land tenure and rights

Variable	%	Variable	%	Variable	%	Variable	%
<b>Access to individually owned land</b>	88	<b>Access to private land (neighbours)</b>	35	<b>Access to forest reserve</b>	92	<b>Access to wetlands</b>	83
<i>Year household acquired access</i>		<i>Year household acquired access</i>		<i>Year household acquired access</i>		<i>Year household acquired access</i>	
1940-1950	6	1940-1950	-	1940-1950	2	1940-1950	2
1951-1960	10	1951-1960	-	1951-1960	2	1951-1960	6
1961-1970	15	1961-1970	4	1961-1970	4	1961-1970	26
1971-1980	35	1971-1980	12	1971-1980	52	1971-1980	49
1981-1990	24	1981-1990	20	1981-1990	28	1981-1990	12
1991-2000	7	1991-2000	31	1991-2000	10	1991-2000	3
2001+	4	2001+	33	2001+	2	2001+	2
<i>How household acquired access</i>		<i>How household acquired access</i>		<i>How household acquired access</i>		<i>How household acquired access</i>	
Inherited	47	Permission by the owner	66	Permission by forest staff	9	Permission by local authority	13
Bought	41	Rented	8	Government allocation	12	Free access without permission	87
Gift	12	Free access without permission	28	Free access without permission	79		
<i>Does this land have formal deed</i>		<i>Does this land have formal deed</i>		<i>Does this land have formal deed</i>		<i>Does this land have formal deed</i>	
Yes	20	Yes	4	Yes	2	Yes	-
No	76	No	6	No	24	No	22
Don't know	4	Don't know	90	Don't know	74	Don't know	78
<i>Right to give out this land</i>		<i>Right to give out this land</i>		<i>Right to give out this land</i>		<i>Right to give out this land</i>	
No right to give	22	No right to give	100	No right to give	100	No right to give	100
With approval from extended family	4	-	-	-	-	-	-
With approval from spouse and children	45	-	-	-	-	-	-
Without any body's approvals	29	-	-	-	-	-	-
<i>Right to sell this land</i>		<i>Right to sell this land</i>		<i>Right to sell this land</i>		<i>Right to sell this land</i>	
No right to sell	25	No right to sell	100	No right to sell	100	No right to sell	100
With approval from extended family	2	-	-	-	-	-	-
With approval from spouse and children	40	-	-	-	-	-	-
Without any body's approvals	33	-	-	-	-	-	-
<i>Right to plant trees on this land</i>		<i>Right to plant trees on this land</i>		<i>Right to plant trees on this land</i>		<i>Right to plant trees on this land</i>	
No right to plant	8	No right to plant	56	No right to plant	20	No right to plant	29
With approval from spouse and children	23	With approvals from landlord	38	With approval from local authority	12	With approval from local authority	50
Without any body's approvals	69	Without any body's approvals	6	With approval from NFA	68	Without any body's approvals	21
<i>Right to cut trees from this land</i>		<i>Right to cut trees from this land</i>		<i>Right to cut trees from this land</i>		<i>Right to cut trees from this land</i>	
No right to cut	14	No right to cut	8	No right to cut trees for commercial use	7	No right to cut	-
With approval from spouse and children	9	With approvals from landlord	65	With approval from local authority	4	With approval from local authority	6
Without any body's approvals	77	Without any body's approvals	27	With approval from NFA	15	Without any body's approvals	94
-	-	-	-	Without any body's approvals	74	-	-

Table 3 Local communities' awareness about forest conservation policy in Uganda

Variable/questions	% response
<b>Are you aware of the Uganda Forest Policy</b>	
Yes	78
No	12
Don't know	10
<b>Source of awareness</b>	
Forestry Department/National Forestry Authority	66
NGO	45
CBO	52
Media	58
Workshops/seminars	56
Forestry Resources and Research Institute (FORRI)	24

majority (47%) strongly agreed that the current 2001 Forest Policy effectively addresses forest management and conservation issues (Table 4).

About 59% agreed that utilization and socio-economic benefits is strongly supported by the Forest Policy. Related, majority (36%) of the respondents disagreed on the statement that forest management and conservation are linked to local people's needs in the Forestry Policy. Half of the respondents disagreed on the feeling that local people have more access to forest products than before under the current Forest Policy.

**Table 4 Opinions what about forest policy in Uganda**

Statement	% response				
	SA	A	D	SD	DK
The current Forest Policy in Uganda effectively addresses management and conservation issues	47	40	4	2	7
Utilization and socio-economic benefits is strongly supported by the Forest Policy	26	59	10	3	2
Forest management and conservation are linked to local people's needs in the Forestry Policy	21	34	36	7	2
The Forestry Policy adequately addresses local participation in forest conservation and management?	30	54	13	-	3
Under the current Forest Policy, local people are involved in forest management than before	12	22	9	57	-
Under the current Forest Policy, local people earn more incomes from the forest related activities than before	6	14	30	48	2
Under the current Forest Policy, local people have more access to forest products than before	4	14	50	26	6
Under the current Forest Policy, forest and tree cover has increased	8	12	52	24	4
Under the current Forest Policy indigenous people are still allowed to live in the forest	2	10	29	31	28
The local people participated in formulation of current Forestry Policy	2	6	20	40	32
Under the current Forest Policy, charcoal burning is illegal	62	30	6	2	-
Under the current Forest Policy, illegal logging is rampant	60	32	8	-	-
Under the current Forest Policy, the local people are still allowed to collect firewood and other non-timber products from the forest for domestic use only	68	20	12	-	-

SA=Strongly agree, A=Agree, D=Disagree, SD=Strongly disagree, DK=Don't know

About 52% of the people also disagreed on the statement that forest and tree cover has increased under the current Forest Policy.

Asked whether under the current Forest Policy, charcoal burning is illegal and whether illegal logging is rampant, 62% and 60% of the respondents strongly agreed on the statement. Likewise, majority (68%) of the respondents strongly agreed that the current Forest Policy give provision for local people to collect firewood and other non-timber products from the forest for domestic use. About 59% of respondents strongly disagreed on the statement that local people are more involved in forest management under the current Forest Policy than. Many also strongly disagreed on local people earn more incomes from the forest related activities than before and feeling that the local people participated in formulation of current Forestry Policy.

#### **Involvement of local people and other institutions in the management and conservation of forests:**

Institutions participating in the management and conservation of natural forests in Uganda include the National Forestry Authority (NFA), National Environment Management Authority (NEMA), Uganda Wildlife Authority (UWA), Local Governments/Authorities and civil society organizations like NGOs and CBOs, local communities and some individuals (Table 5a). About 29% of individuals, however, said that they do not play any significant roles in the management of natural forests. They claim this is the work of NFA. Those who were involved in the management of the natural forests, said they were helping reporting illegal activities, reforestation and that they themselves were withdrawing from illegal logging and burning of charcoal in the forest. Majority (88%) of the respondent said their communities have collaborative forest management arrangement/agreement with NFA and that the arrangement is mainly about sustainable

**Table 5(a) Involvement of local people into management of natural forests**

Variable/question	% response
<b>Who manages the natural forest</b>	
National Forestry Authority (NFA)	92
Local authority	16
NGOs and CBOs	30
Local Communities	28
Some individuals	19
Other institutions like NEMA and UWA	51
<b>Individual roles in the management of natural forest</b>	
No significant role	29
Reporting illegal activities	54
Withdrawing from logging and burning charcoal	23
Reforestation	10
<b>Does this local community have PFM* arrangement with NFA</b>	
Yes	88
No	4
Not sure	8
<b>If yes what are the arrangements</b>	
Sustainable use	79
Enrichment planting	52
Monitoring & reporting illegal activities	75

\*PFM = Participatory Forest Management

**Table 5(b) Involvement of local people into management of farm forests**

Variable/question	% response
<i>Who manages the forest</i>	
Individual owner	96
Family members	72
<i>Individual roles in the management of this forest</i>	
Reforestation/planting more trees	81
Sustainable harvest	45
Raising seedlings for planting	14
Weeding and pruning	28

forest use, monitoring and reporting illegal activities, and enrichment tree planting.

Asked about their involvement in the management of farm forests, majority (96%) of the respondents said they individually manage their farm forest although some (72%) said they also involve other family members (Table. 5b). They said they do mainly tree planting, sustainable harvest, raising seedlings or collecting the wildings from the forest for planting as well as weeding and pruning of certain trees that develop big crowns.

Table 6 Opinion about institutions participating in the management and conservation of forests in Uganda

Institution	% response										
	Role of the institution						Opinion about how the institution is working				
	Lobb- -ying	Monit- -oring	Conser- -vation	Tree planting	Capacity building	Awareness campaigns	Working very well	Working well	Just satisfactory	Not Satisfactory	Totally ineffective
National Forestry Authority (NFA)	20	81	86	79	58	67	18	60	16	6	-
*NEMA	16	42	48	50	32	63	4	30	8	-	-
Uganda Wildlife Authority (UWA)	6	30	34	-	27	45	8	27	12	4	-
Local Authority/ Local Governments	69	21	28	33	46	58	20	51	22	5	2
NGOs	81	37	51	54	75	87	28	54	16	2	-
CBOs	79	35	55	57	73	85	25	50	20	5	-

\*NEMA = National Environment Management Authority

Table 7 Capacity to manage and conserve the forest by local community

Activity	% response				
	Natural forest management	Plantation forest management	Agroforestry/on-farm tree management	Tree nursery establishment & management	General tree planting around schools, churches and mosques
<b>Household member received training</b>					
Yes		32	20	63	59
No		68	80	37	41
<b>Reasons for no training</b>					
No need		24	72	47	30
Expensive		17	20	16	33
Not aware of the opportunity		63	15	50	55
Busy		40	26	27	39
No training provider		61	14	52	58
<b>Person who received the training</b>					
Household head		23	79	55	42
Spouse		20	15	19	40
Both household head and spouse		52	6	20	10
Children		5	-	6	8
<b>Training provider</b>					
Civil Society organizations		55	11	82	75
NFA		58	89	29	38
NEMA		-	-	-	6
FORRI/AFRENA		37	-	48	22
NARO		-	-	16	-
<b>Application of the training</b>					
Yes		63	0	82	59
No		37	100	18	41
<b>Reasons for non- application</b>					
Expensive		23	87	-	52
Time consuming		63	66	54	59
No seedlings		17	19	49	63

**Opinion about institutions participating in the management and conservation of forests in Uganda:** Opinions of the local people about the roles of the institutions participating in the management and conservation of forests in Uganda and how they are performing in relation to management and conservation of forests varied widely among the respondents (Table 6). Outstanding roles of National Forestry Authority (NFA) included monitoring of forest status and illegal activities, conservation of forests, tree planting, awareness creation and capacity building in the area of forest management. Majority (60%) of the people interviewed also think NFA is so far working well to address in addressing these roles.

NEMAs' main roles included awareness campaigns and encouraging tree planting activities. Only 30% of the respondents interviewed think NEMA is working well to address their perceived roles. UWA was perceived to be doing mainly awareness campaigns and conservation activities. Local Governments/Authorities roles were mainly lobbying for support to manage and conserve forests and to create awareness as well as building capacity of the local people to manage and conserve the forests. About 51% of the respondent also think UWA is working well in addressing these tasks. Roles of civil society organizations like NGOs and CBOs were reported to be lobbying for support, encouraging

conservation activities, supporting tree planting, awareness campaigns and capacity building. Majorities of the people said NGOs and CBOs operating in the area were working well.

**Capacity to manage and conserve the forests by local community:** About 68% of the respondents expressed that none of their household members including themselves had received any sort of training in natural forest and plantation forest management respectively. Many of them said they were not aware of any training opportunity nor training provider in the management of natural and plantation forests. Seventy two percent of them said they did not see any need to train in plantation forest management. Contrary to this, majorities of the respondents said some of their household members had received trainings in agroforestry (on-farm tree management), tree nursery establishment and management and the general tree planting around schools, churches & mosques (Table 7). Generally household heads received training more than their spouses and other family members in plantation forest management, agroforestry (on-farm tree management), tree nursery establishment and management. Women received more training in the general tree planting around schools, churches & mosques.

Most people generally reported civil society organizations like NGOs and CBOs, and National Forestry Authority (NFA) (Table 7) as the main training providers for natural and plantation forest management, tree nursery establishment & management, and the general tree planting around schools, churches & mosques. In all cases except plantation forest management, most respondents who received training said their households were putting into practice the knowledge acquired from those trainings. Those who did apply the training especially in plantation forest management said that it is very expensive to invest plantation forest and that the practice is time consuming.

## **DISCUSSION**

Assessment of the efficacy of forestry conservation policy on rural livelihoods in Uganda, institutions, and the trends of changes in forest condition presented in the preceding sections provides several important insights into the strengths and weakness of the current forest policy of 2001. Through this assessment, we attempted to show the level of awareness of the local communities about the forest policy, their opinions about the efficacy of this policy, and their capacity in terms of training to manage the forest resources. However, when drawing conclusions about results

discussed herein, the following cautions should be considered: the subject of policy proved difficult to investigate. Most respondents did often not understand the question asked. Each interview took too long and sometimes respondents got restless and lost interest and concentration with the lengthy interviews. Despite this limitation, the study has been successful in showing the broad picture of local communities' perception of the 2001 Forest Policy.

Although the findings suggest that, many people interviewed were aware of the current Forest Policy especially through National Forestry Authority and the media, all most all of them did not know the policy intents. Lack of clarity of the policy intents often lead to poor outcomes for sustainable forest management and local livelihoods. Similarly, majority of the respondents consented that utilization and socio-economic benefits is strongly supported by the 2001 Forest Policy although some people still feel that they do not have more access to forest products than before. To them this policy puts more emphasis on forest conservation. Rights and obligations of local communities are seldom elaborated clearly in the policy.

The conservation aspect of this policy is even never implemented effectively. Local people's participation in plantation and management of forests is not given sufficient attention and social and cultural aspects of forest management are very often ignored. The roots of these problems can be traced back to the past forest policies of 1929, 1948, 1970 and 1987 (Tumushabe and Bainomugisha, 2004). It is very clear from this study that the local communities feel natural forest cover has declined over the past years. A couple of factors including high demand for timber, charcoal and firewood in the country, massive expansion of sugar cane plantation and the loopholes in the previous forest policies are allegedly responsible for such decline. Little is being done in terms of trainings to build capacity of local people to manage forest resources.

The 2001 Forestry Policy also appears to be more political in nature than being public service oriented. This policy is theoretical whereas practically the attitude of an average official of the National Forestry Authority has remained the same as set by previous policies. Most of the officers of the NFA were reported by the local communities to be displaying more of authoritarian and possessive behaviour, quite similar to a policeman like in the past. The policy recognizes the importance of the involvement of local people in farm forestry but at the same time it is limiting the rights of local people by bringing more land under the control of state and powerful investors, ignoring the ground level realities and needs of the

local population. In fact policy initiatives cannot achieve their objectives unless and until the sustainable livelihood of stakeholders is taken care of. According to Kazoora and Carvalho (2005), "in practice, forest resources are currently being made more inaccessible for the poor and marginalized sections of the communities, whereas the influential along with members of the timber mafia consumes these resources at their own sweet will." This dichotomy creates a sense of lack of ownership among the marginalized sections not only adding to their miseries but also encouraging them to adapt illegal means to meet their needs from forest resources.

The dilemma with most of the natural resources management policies in Uganda is the lack of attention to human dimension aspects and a focus on a "pro-conservation" approach even at the cost of local livelihoods. The trends however may in the near-future change since the world is no longer tied up in the "conservation" versus "development" debate. Rather a new approach "conservation as well as development" are now emerging (FAO, 2001; Shackleton *et al.*, 2002). However, for forest policies to effectively address conservation needs and at the same to be the pro-poor, good governance is a must. Unfortunately, Uganda like many other developing countries good governance is difficult to achieve. Although during the formulation of this 2001 Forestry Policy, the consultation with a group of experts was made, the consultation process was confined to the folds of professional circles. Thus, the policies is stronger on technical consideration but lacking the required flexibility to make them work in real life situations, presenting multiple sets of actors and factors. Thus local communities living adjacent to forest reserves often find themselves in a situation where forest policies either do not support or have harmful affects on their livelihood strategies (Tumushabe and Bainomugisha (2004). It is in this scenario that policy do not meet the expectations of local people who in turn are forced to utilise the forest resources unsustainably to secure their livelihoods. Consequently neither the developmental nor the conservational objectives are met.

### **CONCLUSION**

The current 2001 Forest Policy is not a panacea for addressing forest management issues and the welfare of rural poor in different socioeconomic conditions. Although many local people were well aware of the Forest Policy, nearly all of them did not know the

intents. Capacity in terms of trainings to manage forest resources by local communities is generally very weak.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

In light of the objectives of the study, the following suggestions are made:

- The forest policy should have foundation of carefully organized policy research studies conducted by the academia of both from forestry and social science disciplines. These studies will ensure the involvement of grass root level people and civil society organizations.
- There is need to put people at the centre of development. This focus on people is equally important at higher levels (when thinking about the achievement of objectives such as poverty reduction, economic reform or sustainable development) as it is at the micro or community level. The forest policy should support the livelihoods of rural people through utilization of systematic approach of development i.e. training in alternate income-generating employment like non timber forest products
- The forest policy should be flexible enough to be adopted according to the local situation. It is therefore suggested that the more power over forest management be decentralized at the district level, so that the forest management can be done according to the prevailing local condition. Training and involvement of volunteer local communities, who should collaboratively manage forests resources together with the state, should also be strengthened in the policy.
- Livelihood would be secured only if policies work with people in a way that is congruent with their current livelihood strategies, social environment and ability to adapt. People, rather than the resources they use or governments that serve them, are the priority concern. Adhering to this principle would not only ensure provision of sustainable livelihood but would also enhance involvement of all sections of society in sustainable natural resources management. In this context, it should be realized that generation of income and employment is as important as generating government revenue alone; and forest policy should be an instrument of sustainable forest management rather than its object, otherwise, the poor will remain mired in poverty pushing us into a spiral of over exploitation in the wake of policy failures.



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