

MEDICINAL PLANTS AND ASSOCIATED INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE OF THE

LUGBARA IN ARUA DISTRICT

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Abstract

The role played by traditional medicine especially herbal medicine (HM) is well acknowledged globally and the documentation of this heritage cannot be overemphasized. As the world continues to evolve with changes in lifestyle, invention, discovery of new, sophisticated health infrastructure and medicine, the practice and existence of traditional medicine is being threatened and lost. This study was conducted in Arua district, North Western Uganda with three objectives: to document medicinal plants used by the people, analyze variation of medicinal plant knowledge and explore local practices for conservation of medicinal plants in Arua district. A total of 84 plant species belonging to 70 genera and 39 families were recorded in the study. Malaria had the highest disease claim with herbal medicine use. *Clerodendrum umbellatum* was regarded as an effective anti-malarial. Most formulations were prepared from fresh plant leaves. Oral administration was the main route of administration with doses varying between 2.5 ml to 500ml, administered depending on age and disease intensity. Indigenous knowledge (IK) associated with HM was transferred from generation to generation following the male lineage. Analysis of IK on medicinal plants revealed that gender and education level (<0.05) had an influence but not age. The main conservation challenges included habitat destruction, lack of knowledge on medicinal plants, lack of

germplasm for medicinal plants and knowledge of their propagation. Practices such as limiting collection of medicinal plants to a few knowledgeable individuals, retention and planting of medicinal plants promoted regeneration and conservation of medicinal plants. Although use of traditional medicine is appreciated by the Lugbara community, herbal medicine is largely used for ailments that are not considered life-threatening by the rural poor and those in desperate conditions; otherwise people prefer allopathic medicine to herbal medicine.