

COLLABORATIVE FOREST MANAGEMENT

DEMONSTRATING LINKAGE BETWEEN LIVELIHOODS AND SUSTAINABLE MANAGEMENT OF FOREST RESOURCES IN AND AROUND ECHUYA FOREST, UGANDA

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THE PROJECT

NatureUganda in partnership with National Forestry Authority (NFA), United Organization for Batwa Development in Uganda (UOBDO), Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB), Dansk Ornitologisk Forening (DOF) and local governments of Kabale and Kisoro Districts is implementing a Project in and around Echuya Central Forest Reserve (ECFR) titled “Demonstrating how Collaborative Forest Management can support livelihoods and sustainable management in and around Echuya Central Forest Reserve, Uganda”, since July 2011.

The project supports the NFA to conserve ECFR and targets livelihoods of women and men in Forest Adjacent Communities (FACs) in 9 parishes surrounding Echuya Central Forest Reserve (ECFR).

ECHUYA CENTRAL FOREST RESERVE (ECFR)

Echuya Central Forest Reserve is situated in Bufumbira and Rubanda counties of Kisoro and Kabale districts, respectively. The southern end of the forest runs along the Uganda - Rwanda border. The forest lies between 1°14' - 1°21' S and 29°47' - 29°52'E, covers an area of 3,403 ha (approximately 34 km²), at an altitudinal range of 2,270m – 2,570 m above sea level.

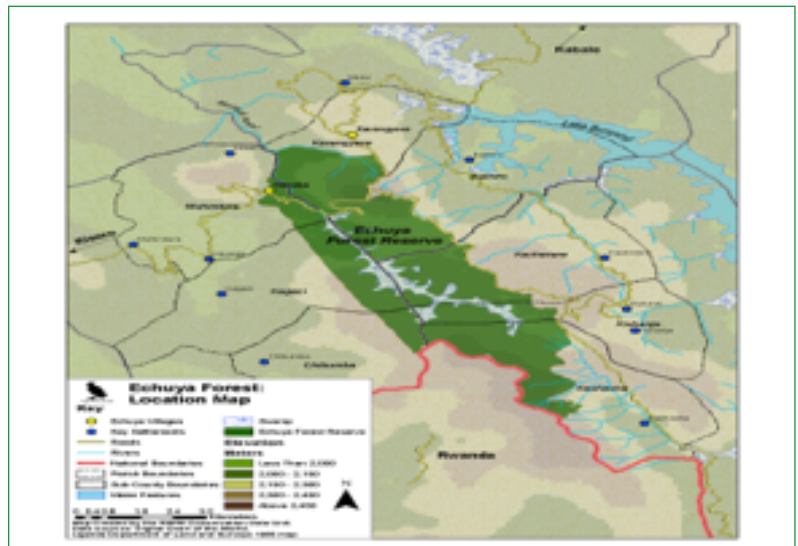


Figure 1: Location map of Echuya Central Forest Reserve
Source: NatureUganda

The forest is located approximately 11 km east of Kisoro town and 15 km west of Kabale town. The main Kabale - Kisoro road passes through the northern end of the forest (Figure 1).

The forest lies at the heart of the biodiversity rich Albertine rift eco-region and is a site of global biodiversity importance. The forest categorized by BirdLife as a Key Biodiversity Area (KBA) and an Important Bird Area (IBA) because of the high diversity of bird species, some of which are globally threatened and or endemic (Byaruhanga *et al* 2001).



Figure 1: Echuya Forest Landscape. adjacent communities at the forest edge
Source: NatureUganda

Echuya is particularly known for its high quality bamboo, *Yushania alpina* which covers approximately 20% of the forest cover. The Eastern side and higher altitude northern end of the Kabale - Kisoro road is covered by broad-leaved forest dominated by mature *Macaranga kilimandscharia* and *Hagenia abyssinica*. The forest contains the large alpine wetland (Muchuya Swamp) which runs north - south along the reserve and draining into the southern boundary.

Echuya forest was gazetted a forest reserve in 1930's and is presently managed by NFA as a national resource (Central Forest Reserve). Unfortunately, the ecological condition and value of the forest have continued to decline because of forest degradation attributed to encroachment and over-utilization of some of the forest resources, especially, bamboo.

Consequently, forest biodiversity is increasingly becoming vulnerable to irreversible decline,

relationship between the NFA and local communities is poor, and, the future of forest indigenous people (Batwa) is at stake. In the case of the latter, not only do they face restricted access and use of forest resources hitherto depended upon, they are loosely socially integrated into host communities.

The forest is surrounded by areas with a very high rural population density that depends almost entirely on agriculture and forest products for their basic livelihood needs (firewood, bamboo for construction, medicinal plants, etc). Most of the landscape around Echuya CFR has been deforested, leaving the forest reserve as the only local source of tree/wood products.

The forest resources are showing signs of degradation due to number of factors including over-harvesting and poor compliance with forest policy and legislation

Rationale for the project

The project recognizes that the Forest Adjacent Communities (FACs) around ECFR are among the poorest in the rural communities in southwestern Uganda. The FACs around ECFR also hosts small population of forest indigenous Batwa people who continue to interact with the forest, albeit constraints imposed by forestry policies and management practices. Both Batwa and hosting communities have for long time developed intricate dependence on the ECFR resources and have maintained resilience towards costs associated with forest conservation such as problem animals and limited use of forest land for agriculture or forest resources for commercial purposes.

Therefore, the project aims at responding to this situation by catalyzing action through demonstrating Collaborative Forest Management (CFM) as a forest management approach that provides opportunities for income generation and improving livelihoods for the forest dependent people as well as opportunities for promoting forest conservation. It is anticipated that project success serve as successful demonstration influencing CFM policies and success story with potential to be replicated elsewhere in Uganda and beyond.

Relevance of the project supported interventions

The CFM demonstration activities supported by the project involves: i) building capacity of key CFM players (namely, FAC's, National Forestry Authority and local governments) to develop and implement CFM arrangements in and around ECFR; ii) promoting sustainable land management practices; and, iii) promoting natural resources based income generating activities.

In order to ensure that the project supported intervention respond to the priority causes of forest degradation or effects of forest conservation on livelihoods, the project invested in establishing a solid body of knowledge (baseline) that informed the selection of appropriate project interventions. The project interventions respond to the following key issues identified by baseline: limited alternatives to forest resources, restricted access to forest resources, declining forest resource base, poor relationships between people and forest managers and costs of forest conservation. The CFM arrangements have thus been supported

as one of the approaches deemed appropriate towards addressing these issues.

Collaborative Forest Management at Echuya CFR

Collaborative Resources Management arrangements at Echuya involve negotiated access and use of certain forest resources by communities from forest adjacent communities on agreed terms and conditions.

Communities are mobilized through CFM Associations whose membership is open to all community members wishing to participate. The negotiated arrangements are committed through a CFM agreement between the NFA and CFM Associations. These agreements are witnessed by the Local Government at sub county and district levels. By January 2014, four (4) Collaborative Forest Management agreements involving 1,540 people in 9 parishes were operational.

The role of the project has been to facilitate negotiations for the CFM agreement between NFA and CFM Association, support implementation of the CFM obligations as well as monitoring the performance and impact of CFM agreements.

The CFM agreements provide formal arrangement for collaboration in forest protection, enhancement and creation of alternative sources of income to reduce pressure on the forest, and, sustainable harvesting of forest resources. In addition, institutional obligations and responsibilities e.g., conducting joint patrol, fighting wild fires and monitoring forest resources are specified in the CFM agreement. On the other hand, NFA commits to participate in implementing community livelihood improvement activities, sensitizing the local communities on the importance of sustainable forest management and the CFM process, supervising resource extraction, and meeting the needs of the CFM associations, among others.

Experiences and lessons |

The following are the experiences and lessons from the ongoing CFM initiative at ECFR.

- a. A respected CFM agreement needs to be integrated into society governance

system. At Echuya, CFM process has been institutionalized into the Local Government system targeting the lowest planning and accountability level (sub-county) within the decentralized form of governance in Uganda. The sub-county is a signatory to the CFM agreements and has binding obligations to fulfill. The project facilitates the integration of CFM into sub-county development plans and programmes. At community level, the CFM is institutionalized into Community governance structures through the CFM Associations and forest resource-use groups. The project has facilitated establishment of formal procedures for guiding or regulating membership into the CFM Associations, participation of members or mobilizing members to fulfill their obligations and comply with the schedules and procedures for accessing forest resources.

- b. There is need for striking balance between cost and benefits of CFM to the people and forest conservation. There are costs for engaging CFM around ECFR such as i) time input in setting up and sustaining participation in CFM meetings and related processes, ii) membership registration and annual subscription fees and, iii) maintaining communication and information sharing. On the other hand, there are livelihood benefits such as i) increased access to forest resources, ii) improved relationship with NFA personnel, iii) capacity for sustainable land management and, iv) incomes from sale of forest products. With regards to forest conservation, CFM becomes beneficial through the following ways: i) regeneration of degraded portions of the forest ii) reducing pressure on forest bamboo through domestication of bamboo, and iii) reduced illegal activities. Therefore, the sustainability of the CFM would depend on whether benefits continue to outweigh costs for engaging in CFM.
- c. CFM implementation around ECFR is faced with challenges and therefore not yet sustainable. The following challenges have been identified:
- i. Meeting the conservation goal through rescheduling the amounts and frequency of resources off take. There is increasing concern on the part of NFA that the bamboo stock in Echuya forest is declining and thus there is need to regulate bamboo exploitation in order to allow natural regeneration. This scenario also applies to the off take of grass from the Muchuya wetland. Besides the degradation of the targeted resources (bamboo and grass), NFA is concerned that the current state of affairs if remains unchecked, it would affect the over-all forest ecology and habitats specialist species such as the Grauer's Swamp Warbler.
 - ii. Understanding CFM among the forest resource users. CFM is variously understood and to some extent misunderstood. To some of the forest resource users, CFM is considered a political process where as it is not.
 - iii. CFM coverage is small (1,300 people; 4 CFM Association) and as such involves a smaller proportion of the population in the FACs. The speed of rolling out CFM throughout all FACs is constrained by financial and logistical resources.
 - iv. Monitoring off take is cumbersome on part of NFA due to its manpower capacity. More so, there are no properly established or designated plots or locations for resources off take. This renders the assessment of effects of resource off take on the habitat weak.
 - v. Capacity to effectively develop and implement CFM is low for both parties. Capacity to negotiate good CFM is low on both parties. The current CFM agreements do not comprehensively address all issues pertaining to CFM and CFR management objectives. CFM implementation has obligations to be met by either party but due to financial constraints, NFA is not able to meet all her obligations such as those relating to regulating and monitoring compliance. On the part of forest resource users, the requirement to pay membership dues and annual subscription is failing some of the prospective CFM members from joining or maintaining their membership.
 - vi. Disruptions to the smooth operations of CFM by illegal activities such as illegal grazing in locations which not only disrupt the resources off take but also benefits a few and acts as a disincentive to join a CFM group. CFM members feel disadvantaged for having to

comply with regulations whereas other people freely access forest resources through these illegal acts.

- vii. Competing forest management requirements and benefits such as the Revenue sharing schemes that constraint the working relationships for CFM. In case of the latter, CFM suffers because Revenue Sharing is considered more beneficial than CFM.

The project extends its support to the following interventions seeking to address these challenges and improve the performance of CFM and enhance CFM benefits.

- a. Sensitizing people about the procedures, requirements and benefits of CFM.
- b. Establishing the sustainable off take levels for the targeted resources and monitoring the off take and likely impacts on forest ecology/biodiversity.
- c. Reviewing the current CFM agreements and implementation arrangements in order to strengthen CFM process and implementation including defining roles and responsibilities and measures for achieving good models of CFM.
- d. Promoting alternatives to some of the resources accessed through CFM such as bamboo (through domestication) and poles (through tree planting/agro forestry/aforestation).
- e. Capacity building for CFM groups and equipping them with skills/capacity to regulate

themselves, including learning and sharing through exchange visits among the CFM groups.

- f. Measures for addressing grievances and conflicts between registered and non-registered members of CFMs.

Conclusion

CFM arrangements at ECFR have been established and embraced by both NFA, local authorities, CFM Association, forest resource user groups and community at large. CFM has delivered benefits to people and forest conservation. The project has been instrumental in facilitating this establishment and monitoring the performance of and impacts on CFM agreements.

CFM around ECFR has created momentum for community/forest resource users not only access negotiated resources but also, to demand for more resources from the forest. It is probable that CFM has set a precedent and thus increased expectations and demands for more forest resources through CFM.

The Echuya CFM model is built on NFA principles for CFM. However, the relationship between the neighbouring communities and Batwa and the forest is unique to Echuya forest because of long history of tradition and interaction between people and the forest on one hand, and being a home of Batwa. This uniqueness provided important basis for learning and comparing CFM at Echuya with other CFM initiatives country wide.

References

- a. *Byaruhanga, A., Kasoma, P and Pomeroy, D 2001. Important Bird Areas in Uganda. East Africa Natural History Society, Kampala*
- b. *CFM agreement for BECLA*
- c. *Echuya CFR Draft Management Plan (2006-2016)*
- d. *EFCP Project Document*
- e. *Institute of Tropical Forest Conservation website*
- f. *NatureUganda Website*
- g. *NFA website*
- h. *Tourism Development Plan for Kisoro District (2004)*

About *Nature*Uganda

*Nature*Uganda, the East Africa Natural History Society is the oldest conservation organization in East Africa having been set up in 1909 as a scientific organization with the primary aim of documenting the diversity of wildlife in East Africa. Although the activities of the society were disrupted by political instability in Uganda in 1970s-1980s, the activities were rejuvenated in early 1990s with the identification of Key Biodiversity Areas (KBAs) such as the Important Bird Areas (IBAs) and Ramsar sites. Over the past 20 years, the activities of the organization have diversified to embrace biodiversity conservation and sustainable Natural Resource Management.

The organization implements research, conservation and advocacy programmes with particular focus on priority species, sites and habitats across the country. This is achieved through conservation projects, environmental education together with government lead agencies, local government and local communities, and membership programmes activities such as Public Talks, excursions and Nature-walks that are key advocacy and public awareness tools. Our mission is to promote the understanding, appreciation and conservation of nature.

In pursuing this mission *Nature*Uganda strives to:

- Create a nature-friendly public
- Enhance knowledge of Uganda's natural history
- Advocate for policies favorable to the environment
- Take action to conserve priority species sites and habitats

*Nature*Uganda is the BirdLife International partner in Uganda and a member of IUCN.

About FDI

Future Dialogues International Ltd is an organization with a Mission to facilitate and assist institutions and societies to achieve their sustainable development aspirations. FDI Mission is driven by FDI goal which is conservation and development aspirations contributing to sustainable development.

FDI believes that Sustainable Development efforts have often been disrupted by differences in opinions, mandates, knowledge levels, information sources, communication barriers, and lack of forum(s) to discourse and plan together for common action. Dialogue offers the best opportunity to overcome these disruptions and look at future scenarios. For good Dialogue to take place, people and institutional mandates must accept and respect each other.

FDI approaches its work through emphasizing the following:

Knowledge: generating evidence based ideas, documentations and innovations for achieving sustainable development. FDI seeks to promote learning approach to influence development and implementation of programmes and activities.

Empowerment: strengthening capacities and preparedness for better institutional and peoples performance. FDI seeks to promote stronger internal systems and procedures for programme/project identification/development, strategic planning, participatory natural resources/environmental management and planning, implementation monitoring and evaluations, conflict management and lesson learning.

Governance: promoting systemic improvement of legal, policy and institutional frameworks and institutions for the conservation and sustainable development actions. FDI seeks to promote harmony within and between policies, legal and institutional frameworks and their implementation.

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