

## PAPERS

# Local organisations and decentralised forest management in Uganda: roles, challenges and policy implications

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### SUMMARY

Policy and legal changes in Uganda have partly devolved forest management from the central to local governments and local community organisations. This paper analyses the roles, responsibilities, powers, legal instruments and incentives for local organisations that are implementing decentralised forest governance in Uganda. Semi-structured questionnaires and key informant interviews of 236 respondents revealed that local organisations promoted decentralised forestry functions such as forest monitoring, making of forest byelaws, tree planting, environmental education, collaborative and integrated planning and budgeting. Donor and central government fiscal support, awareness of forest degradation, understanding the role of forestry and the desire to conserve forests motivated local organisations to participate in decentralised forest management. Lack of a clear policy on ownership and control of private forest resources, inadequate fiscal support from national government, inequitable distribution of benefits and inadequate delegation of decision-making powers over forest management to local actors have hindered full implementation of decentralised forest management. The central government should empower local government authorities and support organisations to effectively implement decentralised forest management in Uganda.

Keywords: decentralisation, forest resources, local organisations, roles, Uganda

### Organisations locales et gestion forestière décentralisée en Uganda: rôles, défis et implications de politique

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Les changements de politique et légaux en Uganda ont dévolué en partie la gestion forestière du gouvernement central aux gouvernements locaux et aux organisations communautaires locales. Cet article analyse les rôles, les responsabilités, les pouvoirs, les instruments légaux et les motivations des organisations locales qui mettent en pratique la gestion décentralisée des forêts en Uganda. Des questionnaires à moitié structurés et des interviews informatives clé des 236 personnes impliquées révèlent que les organisations locales aiment promouvoir des fonctions de foresterie décentralisées telles que, la surveillance de forêts, la création de forêt, la plantation d'arbres, l'éducation sur l'environnement, et le budget et la planification intégrés et collaboratifs. Le soutien financier de donateurs et du gouvernement central, une prise de conscience de la dégradation de la forêt, une compréhension du rôle de la foresterie et un désir de conserver les forêts ont motivé les organisations locales à participer dans une gestion forestière décentralisée. Cette dernière a cependant été restreinte dans sa mise en pratique intégrale par une absence de politique claire sur la propriété et le contrôle des ressources de forêts privées, un support inadéquat du gouvernement national, une distribution inégale de l'aide, et une délégation inadéquate des pouvoirs de prise de décision sur la gestion de la forêt aux acteurs locaux. Le gouvernement central devrait s'efforcer de donner plus de pouvoir aux autorités gouvernementales locales, et soutenir les organisations afin qu'elles puissent mettre en pratique de façon effective la gestion forestière décentralisée en Uganda.

### Organizaciones locales y manejo forestal descentralizado en Uganda: papeles, desafíos e implicaciones para la política

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Por causa de los cambios políticos y legales en Uganda, el manejo forestal ha sido transferido parcialmente del gobierno central a las instituciones locales y organizaciones comunitarias locales. Este estudio analiza los papeles, responsabilidades, poderes, instrumentos legales

e incentivos para las organizaciones locales que implementan el manejo forestal descentralizado en Uganda. Una serie de cuestionarios semi-estructurados y entrevistas de 236 informantes clave reveló que las organizaciones locales promovían funciones forestales descentralizadas tales como la monitoreo forestal, la aprobación de normas forestales, la plantación de árboles, la educación ambiental, la planificación colaborativa e integrada, y los presupuestos. El apoyo financiero por parte de donantes y del gobierno central, la conciencia de la degradación forestal y del papel de la gestión forestal, y el deseo de conservar los bosques fueron los factores que motivaron la participación de las organizaciones locales en el manejo forestal descentralizado. En cambio, la ausencia de una política clara sobre la propiedad y el control de recursos forestales privados, un apoyo financiero inadecuado por parte del gobierno central, una distribución inequitativa de los beneficios, y una delegación insuficiente de poder a los actores locales en cuanto a la toma de decisiones sobre el manejo forestal han impedido la plena implementación de la descentralización del manejo forestal. El gobierno cenral debería delegar a las instituciones gubernamentales locales y otras organizaciones el poder necesario para implementar el manejo forestal descentralizado en Uganda.

## INTRODUCTION

Decentralisation of natural resource management has become a policy tool for many developing countries across the globe. Decentralisation refers to the transfer of responsibility for planning, management, resource acquisition and allocation from the central government and its agencies to the lower echelons of government (Rondinelli et al. 1989). It is regarded as the most functional means to ensure ownership, equity, accountability, transparency and government responsiveness in delivery of public services (Rondinelli and Cheema 1983, Fizein 1997, Blair 2000, World Bank 1988, 2000). The change in policy from the state-managed top down approach to local governments is justified by the recognition of the limits of government agencies in managing resources at the local government level, which has resulted in massive degradation of natural resources and of local people's livelihood systems. In the forest sector, local governments, the private sector, and local communities have been entrusted with the implementation of forest management plans (Ribot 2002). The decentralisation of forest resource management and control is based on the assumption that it will lead to more efficient, equitable and sustainable forest resource use (Larson 2002, Bhattacharya and Basnyat 2005).

Proponents of decentralisation argue that it is good for natural resources management, since it can incorporate local knowledge about resource base (Carney 1995), and forest resources under local governments and community based organisations can be well maintained because they are closely monitored by their staff (Arnold 1998). Decentralisation of forestry is important because rules made for managing forest resources by local authorities are considered legitimate and relevant to local situations (Meinzen-Dick and Knox 1999). However, there are fears that decentralisation of forest management may lead to greater levels of deforestation (Kaimowitz et al. 1998, Ribot 2002). Forests could be better managed under state forest departments because local governments lack technical expertise and financial resources to manage forests and may promote excessive

resource exploitation to expand their tax base. However, judging from observed outcomes, for example, in Nicaragua (Larson 2002) and in Bolivia (Andersson 2003), evidence that situation exists in decentralised forest management is not convincing. Thus, decentralisation outcomes are mixed.

In Uganda, management of forest resources is implemented by the National Forestry Authority (NFA), local governments and private individuals. The District Forestry Services are mandated to manage Local Forest Reserves (LFRs), NFA controls Central Forest Reserves (CFRs) and private forests are under private ownership. These agencies have often proven ineffective at managing forest resources at the local level because the population is heavily dependent on them for timber, poles, fuelwood and other non-timber forest products (MWLE 2002). These agencies are geographically and socially distant from the forest resources, and have inadequate human resources to effectively monitor forest resource use. Without proper institutions to provide plural functions of forest management, the forest resource whether managed as LFRs, CFRs or private takes on the characteristic of an open access common pool resource.

Like other developing countries, decentralisation is one of the fundamentals of democracy in Uganda. The present Constitution of Uganda, adopted in 1995 after restoration of law and order, has incorporated decentralisation into the directives of the national policy (Government of Uganda 1995, 1997). The government of Uganda views participation of local organisations<sup>1</sup> in forest management as a practical and equitable alternative to traditional top-down approaches to forest management (MWLE 2001a, b, 2002). It is believed that actors and agencies with grassroots experience such as NGOs and CBOs will mediate participation of local authorities<sup>2</sup> and their institutions in decentralised forest management. Meaningful devolution, however, requires that local organisations should have incentives, knowledge, skills and powers for decision making, planning, revenue collection, byelaws formulation and apprehension of forest offenders and an appropriate legal framework to effectively undertake decentralised forest management

<sup>1</sup> For the purpose of this study, local organisations are organisational and institutional arrangements for delivery of forestry services at local government level and include sub-county and district local governments, NGOs, CBOs, research institutes, cultural and religious institutions. Local governments are legally mandated to manage decentralised public services while NGOs and other organisations are self governing, voluntary, non-profit and work in partnership with the government in delivering public services.

<sup>2</sup> Local authorities will refer to stakeholders from local organisations operating at the two levels of local government (sub-county and district).

(Crook and Sverrisson 2001, Larson 2003). In addition, roles, responsibilities and powers of actors must be spelt out and institutionalised amongst local organisations in order to sustainably manage forest resources. This information is lacking and local organisation roles, responsibilities, powers of actors over forest management and incentives to manage forests have been underestimated. The study leading to this paper was thus conducted to:

- (i) examine the roles, responsibilities, powers, legal instruments and incentives of local organisations in implementing decentralised forest governance in Uganda;
- (ii) analyse mechanisms under which local organisations work with the central government structures and amongst themselves; and
- (iii) analyse the potential conflicts and challenges to implementing decentralised forest management in Uganda.

The study sought to answer the following research questions: What kinds of local organisations are involved in forest resource management and what role do they play in the implementation of the forest policy under decentralisation? What incentives, powers and legal instruments do local organisations have for managing decentralised forest resources? How do local organisations work with the central government structures and amongst themselves and what potential conflicts arise from implementing decentralised forest management and how are the conflicts resolved? What constraints and challenges to implementation of decentralisation of forest management in Uganda?

### **History and structure of decentralisation of forest management in Uganda**

The management of forest resources in Uganda has vacillated from centralisation to decentralisation over the past century. The first attempt to decentralise forest management was between 1939–1947 with legislation establishing Local Forest Reserves (LFRs) under the Local (District) Administration and Ankole, Toro, Bunyoro and Buganda Kingdoms that had cultural leaders, Village Forests (VF) under Local Administration with revenues derived there from used for development of villages in which the VF was situated and Central Forest Reserves under the control of the Forest Department (Forest Department 1951, 1955). At the time, each District had an African Local Government (ALG) consisting of a District Council constituted by councillors and chiefs. The District Council had powers to make byelaws on the use of forest resources whereas the chiefs had the powers to arrest offenders, issue licenses, collect revenues, and regulate the cutting of timber and wasteful exploitation of trees on public and private lands (Uganda Protectorate 1919, 1949).

However, after independence in 1962 up to mid 1980s, the post independence governments abolished the role of local forest administrations. For example, the Forests

Act of 1964 was amended in 1967 and centralised the forest services hitherto run by the Local Administrators and absorbed them into the centrally organised Forest Department (Hamilton 1984). It was believed that this move would ensure efficiency and rationality in the development of forest resources. This change in governance meant that the institutional arrangements that had been instituted by the Local Administrators and forest users to limit entry and harvesting levels lost their legal standing. The decisions regarding forest resource use were entrusted to the Forest Department as the sole agency with powers to regulate the harvesting of forest produce in all government forest reserves and the use of tree products on public and private land.

From 1995, Uganda embarked on the process of decentralising delivery of services to local government agencies, including the management of forests (Government of Uganda 1997, 1998). The current system of local government assumed most of the responsibilities such as income tax collection, service provision, formulation of policies and laws and managing the environment formerly undertaken by the central government ministries (Government of Uganda 1997). Local governments are expected to deliver services, including the management of forest resources on behalf of the central government. Local government authorities and citizens are expected to become initiators, implementers and overseers of development plans geared towards addressing local problems. Under the 2001 Forest Policy and the National Forest Plan of 2002, the central government recognises local governments and other local community organisations as key players in forestry development (MWLE 2001a, 2002). Along with other public service functions, the objectives for decentralising forestry were to: (i) enhance the role of local government with more developed responsibility to plan and implement forestry activities; (ii) reduce the burden on public finances by empowering local government to outsource financial resources and manage forestry activities; and (iii) encourage participation of local communities and farmers in the management of forest resources.

Currently, there are about 4.9 million hectares of forest in Uganda (24% of the present total land area) (National Biomass Study 2003) (Table 1). The existing natural forests on private land and in government reserves, together with the on-farm tree resources are the major focus of the National Forest Plan (NFP) that emphasises decentralisation forest management (MWLE 2002). In terms of land ownership, 70% of the forest area is found on private and customary land. The remainder is held in trust by the government for the citizens of Uganda: 15% of the Central Forest Reserves is managed by the National Forestry Authority and 15% is found in national parks and wildlife reserves managed by the Uganda Wildlife Authority. The District Forestry Services (district and sub-county local governments) manage small areas (about 5000 ha) of Local Forest Reserves. The majority of private forests are woodlands, and are being depleted rapidly due to restrictions on harvesting of wood and wood products from gazetted protected areas (Jacovelli and Carvalho 1999).

TABLE 1 Approximate area (ha) of forest land and woodland under different categories of ownership and management in Uganda

Cover type	Category of ownership				Total
	Government land			Private land	
	Central Forest Reserves (CFRs)	Local Forest Reserves (LFRs)	National Parks & Wildlife Reserves	Private and Customary land	
Tropical High Forest	319,810	544	253,724	350,129	924,207
Woodlands	414,066	512	461,276	3,098,235	3,974,089
Plantations	19,463	578	2,310	12,715	35,066
<b>Total forest</b>	<b>753,339</b>	<b>1,634</b>	<b>717,310</b>	<b>3,461,079</b>	<b>4,933,362</b>
Other cover types*	420,414	3,322	1,211,597	17,586,377	19,221,710
<b>Total land</b>	<b>1,173,753</b>	<b>4,956</b>	<b>1,928,907</b>	<b>21,047,456</b>	<b>24,155,072</b>

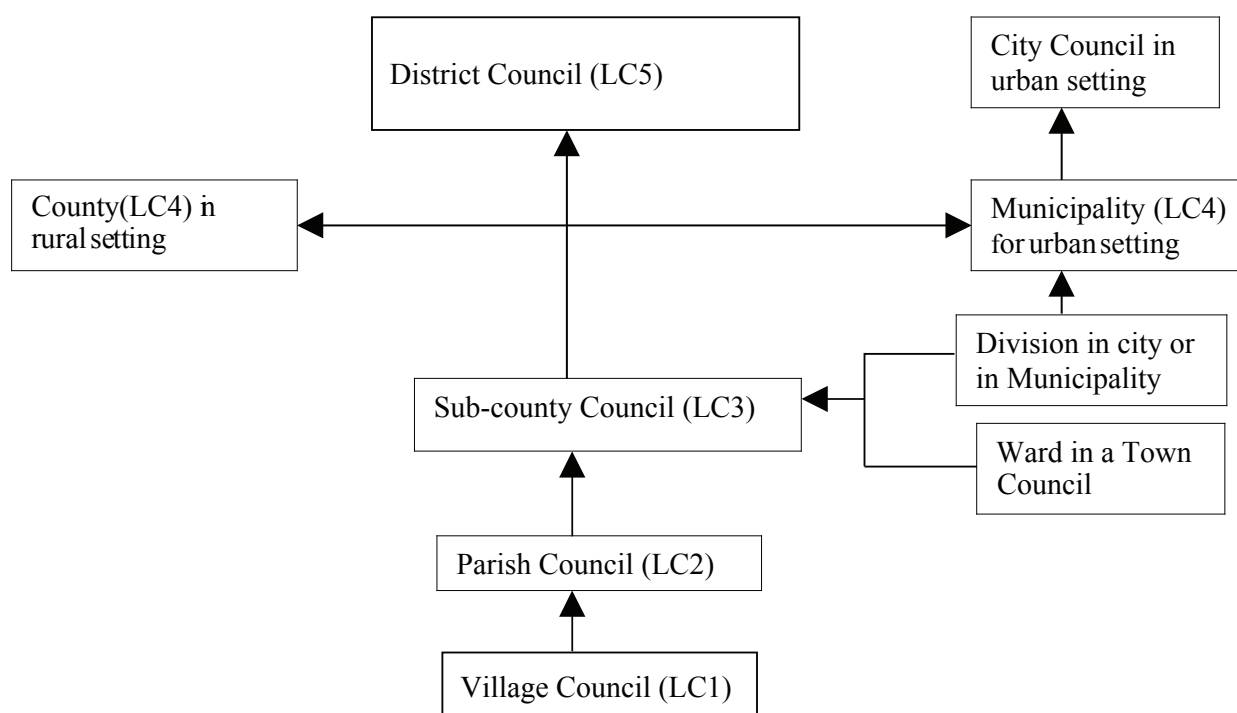
Source: National Biomass Study (2003)

\*Grasslands, wetlands (papyrus and swamp), built up areas, rocks and commercial mono-crop estates (tea, sugar, tobacco)

The legislative framework for decentralisation in Uganda is provided by the Decentralisation Statute of 1993 and the Local Government Act of 1997 (Government of Uganda 1993, 1997). It introduced the five-tier system of elected representatives called Local Councils (LCs), from level one (LC1) to level five (LC5) (Figure 1). Below the District Council is the County or Municipality Council (LC4) in the rural and urban settings respectively. The sub-county (LC3) is the second level of local government. Below the LC3 are the Parish (LC2) and the Village (LC1) levels. Each Local Council at every level includes an executive committee of nine members and a position for the secretary for production and environment that oversees forestry activities.

At the local government level, the District and Sub-county Councils have legislative powers, while the executive committee, which is part of the council, is responsible for executive functions. The executive (administrative) functions are exercised through a hierarchy of officers supervised by the Chief Administrative Officer (at the district level), the Assistant Chief Administrative Officer (County level), Sub-county and Parish chiefs at Sub-county and Parish levels. The executive committee initiates and formulates policies, oversees the implementation of local and central government programmes. The legislative functions are exercised through a hierarchy of elected representatives from LC1 to LC5. These include formulation of policies, ordinances

FIGURE 1 The Local Government structure in Uganda



and byelaws for managing the districts' natural resources, including forestry (Government of Uganda 1997).

In this study, only two levels of the Local Government, the district and sub-county, that are legally mandated to formulate and plan the implementation of natural resources management policies, were considered. Support organisations are mandated to support local governments in implementing natural resource management programmes. Members of Production and Environment Committees of local governments and staff of NGOs and support organisations were selected for interview because they hold decentralised powers for managing natural resources, including forestry (Government of Uganda 1997, 1998).

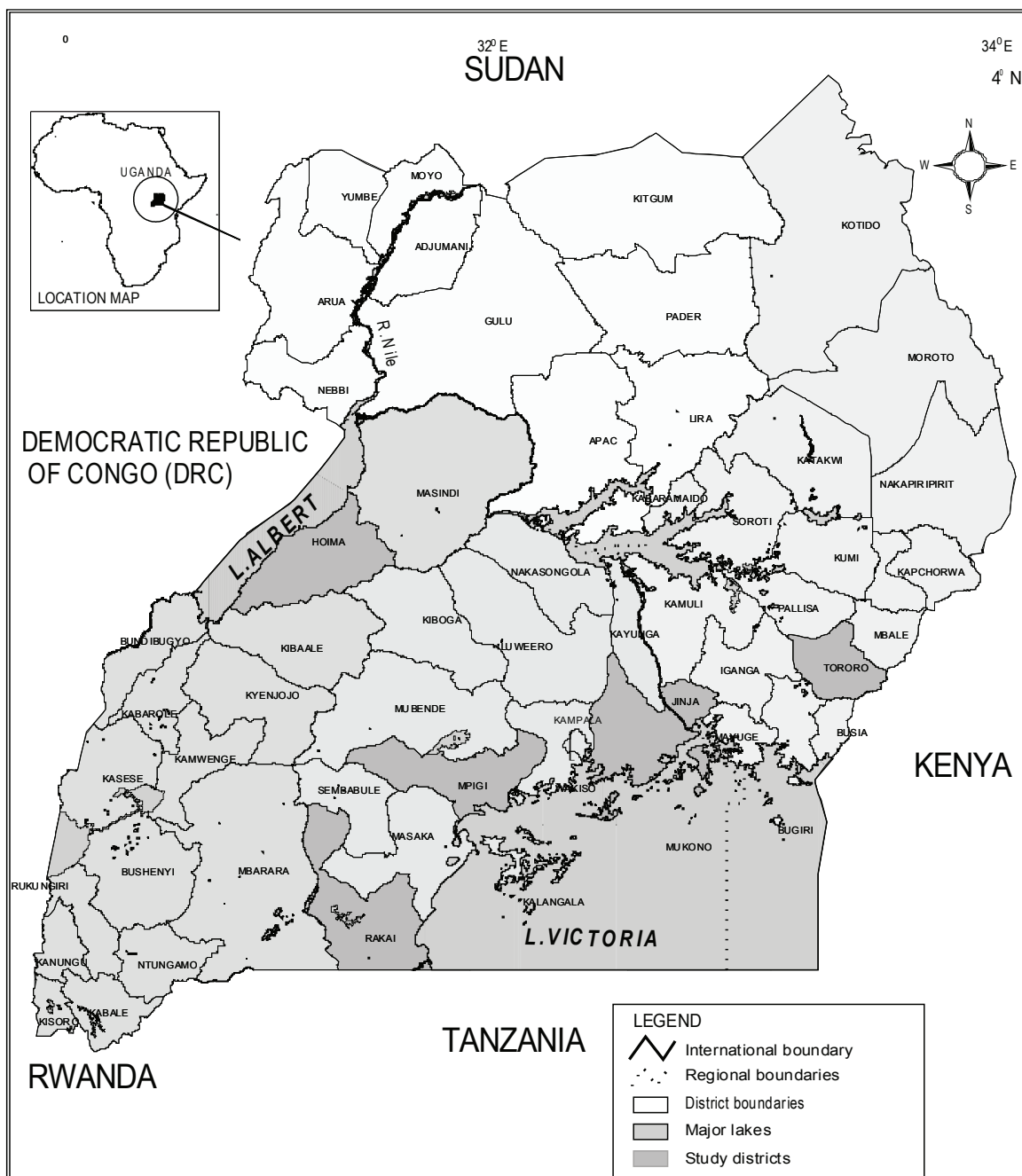
METHODS

The study area

This survey was conducted in Mpigi, Mukono, Jinja, Hoima, Rakai and Tororo districts representing 10.7% of the total number of districts in Uganda (Figure 2).

The districts were selected based on regional coverage, the presence of decentralised forests and collaborative forest management initiatives, and the level of decentralisation. The districts covered the four regions of Uganda i.e. Jinja and Tororo districts in the East, Hoima in the West, Rakai, Mpigi and Mukono in central. None of the districts was

FIGURE 2 Map of Uganda showing the study districts



selected from the northern region due to insecurity at the time of the study. Apart from Hoima, other districts pioneered the implementation of decentralised services in Uganda (Ministry of Local Government 1996). In terms of forest cover, Tororo district had the lowest forest acreage with Hoima and Mpigi Districts having the highest forest cover (Table 2).

to participate in decentralised forest management, and constraints and challenges faced by their organisations in decentralisation of forest management. Within the sub-county and district local governments, only members of Production and Environment Committees were selected for interview because they hold decentralised powers for managing natural resources, including forestry (Government

TABLE 2 *The biophysical and demographic characteristics of the study sites*

District	Land area (km <sup>2</sup> )	Forest area (km <sup>2</sup> )	Forest area under central government (CFRs)(km <sup>2</sup> )	Forest area under local government (LFRs)(km <sup>2</sup> )	Area under private forest*	% of area under LFRs	Population density (persons per km <sup>2</sup> )
Hoima	5,932.8	1605.1	595.36	0.32	1009.42	0.02	59
Mpigi	3,605.6	719.5	303.40	3.30	412.80	0.46	115
Mukono	12,655.7	1,079.8	515.27	4.99	559.54	0.46	64
Rakai	4,908.7	382.6	363.04	0.85	18.71	0.22	96
Jinja	722.7	61.3	40.00	1.50	19.80	2.45	573
Tororo	1,849.3	31.05	7.00	0.63	23.42	1.53	302

\* Majority of area under forest is on private forests and farmlands

The districts had on-going collaborative forest management (CFM) programmes as joint ventures between National Forestry Authority and the local people, for example, Nabbanga and Mabira Forest Reserves in Mukono District, Sango Bay Forest Reserve in Rakai District, and Mpanga Forest Reserve in Mpigi District. Others are Tororo Plantation Forest Reserve in Tororo District, Bugoma Forest Reserve in Hoima and Itanda falls within the Nile Bank Forest Reserve in Jinja District. According to Scott (1998), collaborative forest management promotes equitable sharing of benefits from the management of the resource and helps to build community support in the management of forest resources. These districts were thus expected to provide information on the successes and failures of community based and decentralised forest management in Uganda.

### Data collection

Documents from the non-governmental organisations forum in each district were reviewed to identify organisations that influence forest management, provide services, training, research and support to the forestry sector at the local government level. A total of 53 local organisations were sampled: six district local governments, 30 sub-county local governments and 17 support organisations (six non-governmental organisations (NGOs), seven community-based organisations (CBOs), two research institutes, and cultural and religious institutions, respectively). Five sub-county local governments were selected randomly from a list of the sub-counties provided for each district, making a total of 30 sub-counties (25%) of the total number of sub-counties in the study districts. Semi-structured questionnaires were administered to 236 respondents selected randomly from these organisations to ascertain their roles and incentives

of Uganda 1997, 1998). The nature of organisations and educational background of the respondents are presented in Table 3.

The majority of the respondents (91.5%) were from local government. Sixty-eight percent of the respondents were trained in forestry and environmental management. The high number of respondents with forestry training implies that there are many people who are aware that decentralisation of forest management occurs in Uganda. About 53% of respondents had tertiary education and probably understood decentralisation policy and forest resource management. Nearly half of the respondents (53.4%) mentioned that forest management had been decentralised, 36% indicated that they were aware of forest management being decentralised, while (10.6%) had no idea about decentralised forest management.

Under the decentralised system in Uganda, local government is the key level in relation to policy-making, financing and planning forest management and other natural resources under the Local Government Act of 1997 and the National Forestry and Tree Planting Act of 2003 (Government of Uganda 1997, 2003). Documents, reports and publications about forest resources management laws, policies and regulations from local organisations and forest management authorities were reviewed to ascertain forest related activities that are supported by local governments and local level support organisations, forest rules and byelaws formulated and passed, and linkages with other stakeholders engaged in forest management.

### Data analysis

Questionnaire responses were edited, coded and analysed using the STATISTICA statistical package version 6.0

TABLE 3 Organisations and educational profile of the respondents involved in decentralised forest management in Uganda (N=236)

Characteristic	% Response
<b>Nature of the organisation</b>	
Sub-county governments	71.6
District governments	19.9
Non-governmental organisations (NGOs)	3.4
Community based organisations (CBOs)	3.0
Research institutes	1.3
Cultural and religious institutions	0.8
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.0</b>
<b>Educational level</b>	
Primary education	3.0
Secondary education	44.0
Tertiary and/or University	53.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.0</b>
<b>Attended forestry and/or environment related training</b>	
Yes	68.2
No	31.8
<b>Reasons for attending training</b>	
Understand aspects of forestry and environmental management	59.0
Represent the interests of their organisations	33.5
Develop a professional career	7.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.0</b>

(StaSoft, Inc 2003). Multiple responses with repeated answers were categorised and tallied using the multiple dichotomy method (de Vaus 1996). Cross tabulations, frequency distributions and percentages were used to analyse the most dominant responses among other responses given by respondents on the roles, linkages with other organisations in decentralisation of forest management. In addition, frequency distributions were obtained for powers and challenges local organisations face in decentralisation of forest management. Chi-square tests (Rao 1973, Zar 1999) were used to show whether incentives such as revenue generation from forest resources, financial support from donors and local and central government, and awareness of the importance of forestry motivated local organisations to engage in decentralised forest governance. Furthermore, chi-square tests were employed to examine the roles of local organisations decentralised forest management. Information from legal documents and work plans was subjected to content analysis.

## RESULTS

### Roles of local organisations in decentralised forest management

The majority (95%) of respondents said that their organisations were involved in promoting tree planting. Other

important activities mentioned by respondents were tree nursery establishment and management, and environmental education and awareness (Table 4).

Nearly all respondents mentioned tree planting as a major activity promoted by the organisations visited. The roles and activities of local organisations differed significantly among respondents (Table 4). Local governments were mainly involved in monitoring forest activities and planning and formulating of policies and forest byelaws. Support organisations were mainly involved in promoting environmental education and biomass energy conservation technologies. Proposal writing for funding and research on agroforestry were primarily undertaken by support organisations. Beekeeping and promotion of forest ecotourism did not significantly differ as the activities undertaken by local organisations (Table 4).

### Linkages established for implementing decentralised forest management

About 86%, of the respondents mentioned that their organisations had established links with other organisations to implement forestry activities, while 14% said that their organisations worked independently. Exchange of information, technical backstopping and input supply were the most frequently mentioned linkages (Table 5).

Seventy three percent of the respondents said that their organisations are motivated to work with others to utilise the

TABLE 4 *The roles and activities of local organisations in the decentralisation of forest management in Uganda*

Roles	DGs (N=47)	SCGs (N=169)	SOs <sup>+</sup> (N=20)	Overall (N=236)	$\chi^2$
Promotion of tree planting (afforestation and agroforestry)	46 (98)	160 (95)	18 (90)	224 (95)	1.873ns
Tree nursery establishment and management	40 (85)	147 (87)	17 (85)	204 (86)	0.149ns
Environmental education and awareness	46 (98)	126 (75)	19 (95)	191 (81)	20.64**
Promotion of energy conservation technologies	4 (9)	73 (43)	7 (35)	84 (36)	22.89***
Planning forestry activities	33 (70)	34 (20)	14 (70)	81 (34)	52.19***
Monitoring illegal forest use	27 (57)	38 (23)	4 (20)	69 (29)	20.94***
Promotion of bee keeping	14 (30)	38 (23)	4 (20)	56 (24)	1.251ns
Formulation of policies and byelaws	22 (47)	32 (19)	3 (15)	57 (24)	15.04***
Promotion of ecotourism	8 (17)	16 (10)	3 (15)	27 (11)	2.344ns
Promotion of forestry research	4 (9)	7 (4)	7 (35)	18 (8)	15.69***
Writing proposal for funding forestry activities	2 (4)	5 (3)	5 (25)	12 (5)	10.78**

DGs=District governments, SCGs=sub-county governments, SOs=support organisations.

<sup>+</sup>Support organisations include: NGOs, CBOs, research institutes, and cultural and religious institutions.

Numbers in the parenthesis represent percentage of responses.

df=2, ns =non-significant, \*\*, \*\*\* =significant at  $p<0.05$  and  $p<0.001$ , respectively

TABLE 5 *Linkages established amongst organisations for implementing forestry activities in Uganda*

Kind of linkage	District governments (n=45)	Sub-county governments (n=142)	Support organisations <sup>+</sup> (n=17)
Technical advice in forestry management practices	87	78	94
Exchange of information about forestry governance	80	70	94
Input supply	57	37	47
Joint implementation of forestry activities	31	28	53
Provision of credit facilities to those involved in forestry	24	18	47

<sup>+</sup>Support organisations include: NGOs, CBOs, research institutes, and cultural and religious institutions.

\*Percentages may total over 100 due to multiple responses.

TABLE 6 *Incentives for undertaking decentralised forest management with in local organisations in Uganda*

Incentive(s)	DGs (n=47)	SCGs (n=169)	SOs <sup>+</sup> (n=20)	Total (N=236)	$\chi^2$
Control degradation of forest resources from overuse	43 (92)	150 (89)	19 (95)	212 (90)	1.062ns
Awareness of forestry importance to the socio-economic wellbeing of local people	29 (62)	121 (72)	8 (40)	158 (67)	8.79**
Revenue generation from sale of forest produce	23 (49)	77 (46)	10 (50)	110 (47)	0.629ns
Rehabilitate degraded areas	12 (26)	17 (11)	18 (90)	47 (20)	58.91***
Financial support from donors	5 (11)	9 (5)	15 (75)	29 (13)	80.69***
Financial support from local government	6 (13)	18 (11)	1 (5)	25 (11)	1.026ns
Financial support from central government	5 (11)	13 (8)	2 (10)	20 (9)	0.705ns
Government policy	8 (17)	7 (4)	1 (10)	19 (8)	12.23**
Available technical staff	3 (6)	6 (4)	1 (5)	10 (4)	0.698ns
To have access to cheap planting materials	1 (4)	5 (3)	1 (5)	7 (3)	0.366ns

DGs=District governments, SCGs=Sub-county governments, SOs=Support organisations.

<sup>+</sup>Support organisations include: NGOs, CBOs, research institutes, and cultural and religious institutions.

Percentages may total over 100 due to multiple responses and numbers in the parenthesis represent percentage of responses.

df=2, ns=non-significant, \*\*, \*\*\* significant at  $p<0.05$  and  $p<0.01$ , respectively.

expertise and technical knowledge they are lacking, while 53% mentioned sharing of financial resources and facilities. Other factors promoting partnerships were sharing roles and responsibilities (48%), sharing information (38%) and legal mandate to network with others (27%). Twenty two percent indicated the existence of formal co-ordinating mechanisms, such as board and local council meetings and informal meetings of staff.

### Incentives for undertaking decentralised forest management in local organisations

Control of degradation of forest resources, raising awareness of the importance of forestry, conservation of the environment, generating revenue from forests and rehabilitating degraded forest lands were reported as the most important incentives motivating involvement of local organisations in decentralised forest management (Table 6).

Some of the perceived incentives for promoting decentralised forest management in local organisations differed significantly among respondents (Table 6). More respondents from sub-county and district governments were motivated by awareness of the importance of forestry to the socio-economic wellbeing of local people ( $\chi^2 = 8.79$ ,  $df=2$ ,  $p<0.05$ ). The desire to rehabilitate degraded forest areas ( $\chi^2 = 58.91$ ,  $df=2$ ,  $p<0.001$ ) and to receive financial support from donors ( $\chi^2 = 80.69$ ,  $df=2$ ,  $p<0.001$ ) significantly motivated respondents from support organisations to participate in decentralised forestry (Table 6). More respondents from district governments were also motivated to participate in decentralised forest management because of the government policy to bring more land under forestry ( $\chi^2 = 12.22$ ,  $df=2$ ,  $p<0.05$ ). However, the desire to control forest degradation, financial support from local and central governments, availability of technical staff, and the desire to generate revenue from forests and to allow local people to access planting materials did not differ significantly among the respondents.

### Decision-making and decentralised forest management

About 55% of the respondents said that their organisations had powers to make decisions over management of decentralised forest resources, while 45% said that their organisations did not. The decision-making powers mentioned were planning and budgeting (56%), monitoring compliance with forest rules (47%), formulation of forest rules (byelaws and ordinances) (43%), and licensing harvesting and sale of forest produce (10%). The reasons given by those whose organisations had no powers to make decisions over decentralised forest management were lack of legal mandate to manage forests (72.8%), ownership of forests by the central government (19.2%), and lack of cooperation from the state forest officials (8.0%).

### Byelaws and sanctions regulating decentralised forest resource use

About 43% of the respondents said that their organisations participated in the formulation of byelaws that regulate forest resource use. More respondents from district governments (51%) said that their organisations had powers to regulate forest use and formulate forest byelaws than from sub-county governments (44.4%) and support organisations (10%) ( $\chi^2 = 11.97$ ,  $df=2$ ,  $p<0.05$ ). Respondents from support organisations said that their organisations rarely participated in the formulation of byelaws. The most frequently mentioned forest rules and/or byelaws formulated by local organisations were related to tree planting and regulation of forest resource use (Table 7).

### Conflicts over management of decentralised forest services

The majority of respondents (89.2%) said conflicts occurred due to inequitable sharing of forest revenues between local governments and the National Forestry Authority. Other

TABLE 7 Forest byelaws formulated to regulate decentralised forest resource use by local organisations in Uganda

Kind of byelaws made	District governments (n=24)*	Sub-county governments (n=75)*	Support organisations <sup>+</sup> (n=2)*	Overall (N=101)
Tree planting at all levels	17 (71)	43 (57)	1(50)	61 (60)
Harvesting forest products for commercial use need a permit	7 (29)	33 (44)	1(50)	41 (41)
Protection of hills and water sources	8 (33)	16 (21)	0	24 (24)
Local Councillors to recommend forest users for permits and licences to the Forest Department	2 (8)	10 (33)	0	12 (12)
Levying high taxes on "outsiders" involved in forest exploitation	4 (17)	7 (9)	0	11 (11)
No use of power saws to harvest timber in natural forest	2 (8)	9 (12)	0	11 (11)

+Support organisations include: NGOs, CBOs, research institutes, and cultural and religious institutions.

\*Percentages may total over 100 due to multiple responses and numbers in the parenthesis represent percentage of responses. Numbers in the parenthesis represent percentage of responses (Percentages may total over 100 due to multiple responses).

TABLE 8 *Challenges of implementing decentralised forest management by local organisations in Uganda (N=236)*

Challenge (s)	DGs (n=47)	SCGs (n=169)	NGOs (n=8)	CBOs (n=7)	RI (n=3)	CR (n=2)	Overall (N=236)
Inadequate financial allocation to forestry	32 (68)	88 (52)	6 (75)	4 (57)	2 (100)	2 (67)	134 (57)
Lack of awareness on forest management	25 (54)	74 (44)	6 (75)	5 (71)	1 (50)	1 (33)	112 (48)
Inadequate staff manage forestry	17 (36)	71 (42)	3 (38)	3 (43)	1 (50)	1 (33)	96 (41)
Insecure land and tree tenure	14 (30)	39 (23)	1 (1)	1 (13)	2 (29)	0	57 (24)
Inadequate field equipment for monitoring forestry activities	11 (23)	40 (24)	2 (25)	1 (14)	2 (100)	0	56 (24)
Overlapping authority and unclear chain of command between local councils and forestry staff	15 (32)	35 (21)	0	0	0	0	51 (22)
Inadequate collaboration amongst actors in forest resource management	9 (19)	31 (18)	4 (50)	1 (14)	0	1 (33)	46 (20)
Inadequate forestry inputs	3 (6)	34 (20)	0	1 (14)	1 (50)	0	39 (17)
Long rotation of trees	4 (9)	27 (16)	0	0	0	0	29 (12)
Politicians collaborating with forest offenders	7 (15)	20 (12)	0	1 (14)	1 (50)	0	29 (12)

DGs=District governments, SCGs=Sub-county governments, CR=Cultural and religious institutions.

Numbers in the parenthesis represent percentage of responses (Percentages may total over 100 due to multiple responses)

conflicts were due to the national government agents prioritising exploitation at the expense of rehabilitating degraded areas (26.1%), and lack of a clear policy to control forest produce on private forests and farmers' land (9.2%). Eight percent of the respondents indicated that conflicts occurred because of the unwillingness by the National Forestry Authority staff to cooperate with local governments and other local actors to discuss forest resource use and management strategies.

### Challenges to implement decentralised forest governance in local organisations

The most critical challenges to implementation of decentralised forest management reported by respondents were inadequate finance and lack of awareness on the importance of forestry by local people. The other challenges were lack of clear policy on the ownership and control of forest resources on private land and overlapping authority and unclear chain of command between local councils and forestry staff (Table 8).

## DISCUSSION

### Role of local organisations in the implementation of decentralised forest management

It was found that local governments support activities aimed at conservation of forest resources, improving the welfare of local people and restoration of degraded areas such as tree planting, forest policing, and monitoring and apprehending forest offenders. Local governments make use of Local Defence Forces to impound forest produce and equipment

and arrest offenders particularly those who are armed and violent. It was also noted that roadblock check-points are mounted on highways to impound illegally harvested forest produce.

Local governments also promote activities such as agroforestry, beekeeping and tourism development that help local people to improve their livelihoods without wood extraction from forest reserves. This is done through training workshops and radio programmes. In the districts of Jinja and Rakai, the district councils had passed a resolution to establish ecotourism sites for bird watching at Itanda falls along the River Nile bank forest and Musambwa Twin Islands, respectively. These activities are in line with provisions of the 2001 Forest Policy (MWLE 2001a) and the 2002 National Forest Plan for Uganda (MWLE 2002) geared towards the reduction of poverty and bridging the gap between forest users and the National Forestry Authority and District Forestry Services in the management of forest resources.

Collaborative forest management is also promoted between local governments and the National Forestry Authority and local people living adjacent to Mabira Forest Reserve in Mukono, Mpanga Forest Reserve in Mpigi, Sango Bay in Rakai, Tororo in Tororo Municipality and Bugoma in Hoima to build the capacity of local people in forestry management. Through collaborative forest management, communities adjacent to forests are sensitised about their rights and obligations over forest resources as well as the socio-economic and ecological importance of forest resources to their livelihoods.

Local organisations had recruited technical staff and mobilised fiscal resources and equipment to implement decentralised forestry activities. They also have radio programmes about forest conservation. Furthermore, local

governments, NGOs and community based organisations make and implement local budgets, and draw up integrated development plans that incorporate forestry activities, an indication of their commitment to implement decentralisation of forest management. These organisations have a wider and stronger focus on poverty alleviation, and are able to reach community members effectively. As such they mobilised and recognised community groups as the main stakeholders in forestry affairs through environmental education and collaborative forest management.

### **Collaboration as a strategy for decentralised forest management**

Local organisations communicate vertically with the central government authorities and horizontally with other actors at local government level involved in agriculture, forestry and environmental protection programmes. This is in line with Uganda's Forest Policy of 2001 (MWLE 2001a) and the National Forest Plan of 2002 (MWLE, 2002) that emphasise collaboration between National Forestry Authority and actors at local government levels in the management of forest resources. The most important approaches used are informal staff meetings, information exchange, field visits, provision of credit, joint planning, and representation at formal administrative functions and on structures like task-forces, councils and boards. Meetings and field visits facilitated information exchange amongst organisations, thus helping to publicise forestry programmes. For example, local people especially those living adjacent to gazetted forests of Mpigi, Mukono, Rakai were trained in non-destructive timber harvesting initiatives such as beekeeping and making of handicrafts to enable them earn income.

Through collaboration, the National Forestry Authority encourages private investment in tree planting by leasing public forest land to interested private individuals. Local organisations also link up with donor agencies and other partners engaged in decentralised forestry through funding, sharing of technical staff, information and facilities, for example, the European Union (EU) offers a special fund under the Sawlog Production Grant Scheme (SPGS) to individuals and organisations involved in commercial tree planting in Uganda. NGOs such as World Vision, International Care Relief and Africa 2000 Network support community initiatives and offer technical assistance to organisations involved tree planting. Linkages amongst partners enable them to combine resources and learn from the experiences of other actors in solving forestry and environmental problems, staff training and in reducing the cost of monitoring forest resources. Collaboration has also enhanced the quality of decision-making in natural resource management, for example, in areas where collaborative forest management (CFM) has been initiated, committees have been set up to communicate the needs and interests of the local people with forest officials. In turn, the National Forestry Authority and District Forestry Services have incorporated the needs of local people in their work plans (Onyango 2005).

### **Incentives for participation in decentralised forest management**

Donor and central government funds are important incentives that motivate local organisations to participate in decentralised forest governance. Incentives are essential prerequisites for participation of local organisations and communities in the conservation of forest resources. Local governments participate in forestry as a strategy to access national funding for tree planting and afforestation programmes. For example, devolved central government funded programmes like the Plan for Modernisation of Agriculture (PMA) and the National Agricultural and Advisory Services (NAADS) integrate forestry as a strategy to improve the livelihoods of people through increased wood production (MWLE 2002). Thus local governments formulate environmental action plans as a precondition to access central government funding.

Raising awareness on the importance of forestry in the livelihoods of local communities whose livelihoods depend on forest resources is an important incentive for decentralised forest management. In Uganda, forest degradation continues to occur because the human population is heavily dependent on them for forest products and due to ineffective monitoring by forest officials. For example, tropical high forest cover declined from 762 000 ha in the 1970s and to about 650 000 ha in 2002. This puts the annual loss of forest cover at rate of 3% (NEMA 2002). Discussion with staff from local governments and support organisations revealed that local communities will be most affected in future as forest resources continue to be degraded. Thus, the belief that their constituents have rights to certain level of resources and environment quality, and the protection of these rights qualified them to have a role in the management of forest resources.

It was also found that income generation is an important incentive for local governments' involvement in decentralised forest management. Local governments participate in order to access and equitably share revenue generated from forests. Local governments have mandatory functions to implement under the Local Government Act. These functions require local governments to outsource funds and forests are the immediate available sources of local revenue to fund local government programmes. As noted by Larson (2003), participation of local governments and community based organisations in forest management enables them to gain access to forest resources and income from sale of forest products. It also creates incentives for local organisations and communities to invest in forest management.

Funds from donors are also important catalysts for participation of local organisations in natural resources management. For example, over 90% of the budgets for local governments and support organisations were funded by donors. As a result, most organisations planned most of their activities according to the conditions set by donors. However, local dependence on donor funding limited the autonomy of organisations to plan according to local priorities because of the conditions frequently attached to

the use of the money from donors.

### **Decision-making powers for decentralised forest management**

Unlike support organisations, most of the local governments had passed statements and resolutions that protect forest resources, such as those prohibiting cutting of trees for timber and charcoal without a license; and impounding of vehicles and timber being transported at night and each household to plant trees to replace those cut. Many of these statements and resolutions support national environment policy or legal framework and address problems of deforestation such as over exploitation of forest resources and protection of marginal areas and water sources. This is provided for in sections 39 and 40 of the Local Government Act of 1997 (Government of Uganda 1997) and the National Forestry and Tree Planting Act of 2003 (Government of Uganda 2003). Discussion with local government officials revealed that powers to formulate byelaws are carefully scrutinised to ensure that local governments only make laws that support national environment policy or legal framework. However, information from documents revealed that most of the statements passed by the sub-county and district councils had not been enacted into law as stipulated in the National Forestry and Tree planting Act. Only Tororo District Council had enacted the Tororo District Environmental Ordinance of 2003. Local governments that had not enacted byelaws and ordinances as stipulated cited inadequate technical capacity and central governments failure to fully decentralise forest management. In contrast, NGOs, CBOs, research institutes and cultural and religious institutions had no mandate to carry out forest policing.

It was found that decision-making over most strategic activities, including the issuing of permits and licenses for forest exploitation, and a wide-ranging authority for apprehending and prosecuting offenders are entrusted to the District Forestry Services of local governments and the National Forestry Authority. Discussion with staff from support organisations revealed that they have no mandate to undertake such activities. This implies that the involvement of NGOs and civil society organisations in the management of forest resources is generally limited to service delivery and responsibilities for helping the local and national government implement forest policy. The fact that NGOs and civil society organisations have not been entrusted with powers and rights to control and regulate resources they are managing suggests that the central government is unwilling to facilitate decentralised forest management. To be effective, devolution should not be about devolving responsibilities for decentralised service delivery, but should rather devolve rights and discretionary powers to make decisions over the use of productive resources as well as recognition in the legislation process (Ribot 2002). Support organisations must be in a position to determine the distribution of benefits and costs from forest resources. As noted by Ostrom (1990) and Hirschmann (2003), local participation in decision-making makes local organisations have a sense of ownership of their

decisions, especially rules for resource use and monitoring, and enforcing such rules.

### **Challenges and policy implications to implementation of decentralised forest management**

Financial benefits accruing from revenues, licences, and permits from sale of forest produce from Central Forest Reserves (CFRs) fell short of local government expectations because a greater proportion is retained by the semi-autonomous National Forestry Authority. Local government representatives revealed that they were dissatisfied with the 40% share of the revenue generated from sale of forest produce because they consider themselves as the *de facto* owners of the forests within their areas of jurisdiction. According to the National Forestry and Tree Planting Act of 2003, 60% of the revenue from CFRs goes to the national government, while 40% is remitted back to the district local governments. The district governments in turn are mandated to remit 25% to the sub-county governments where these forests are situated. On the other hand, local governments are supposed retain 100% of the revenue from Local Forest Reserves (LFRs).

Revenue sharing is very important since each local government has mandatory functions to undertake and to enable local governments fund their own priority activities. Discussions with local government authorities revealed that LFRs decentralised are degraded owing to earlier forest management practices and uses under the Forest Department and are of less economic value to the local governments and would infringe on the already limited finances of the local government to restore them. Unequal distribution and sharing of benefits between the central government and the local governments has created an atmosphere of suspicion leading to disinterest in forestry activities by local governments. It also limits budgetary commitment to forestry because most local governments are reluctant to invest more money in forestry without the assurance of adequate returns. According to Wade (1988), inequitable distribution of benefits is a disincentive to forest development because local forest users are reluctant to invest in forestry once the resource is unable to meet users' needs and benefits are unpredictable.

The findings of this study show that the National Forestry Authority prioritises forest exploitation at the expense of forest conservation. It was noted that a greater percentage of revenue generated from the sale of forest produce is not ploughed back into forestry by the central government. Furthermore, most local governments hardly receive financial support from the central government. For instance, in the financial year 2002/2003, only 1.1% of the national budget was allocated to support forestry activities (Government of Uganda 2002), which was regarded too small to sustain the operational activities of the District Forest Services. Local government staff felt that the central government transferred extra responsibilities to manage forest resources on its behalf without providing adequate resources. This has created confusion between local governments and the

central government on budgetary support to the forestry sector because neither the local government nor the central government is willing to commit adequate financial support. Most local governments included in this allocated less than 1% of their total operating budget to forestry. As a result, forestry activities under their jurisdiction go without supervision for long periods of time and cases of forest degradation are seldom followed up. The low central government fiscal contribution to forestry shows the reluctance on part of the central government to improve the capacity of local governments and other community based organisations in the implementation of decentralised forestry services. Thus, there is a need for the central government to give local government units and other support organisations resources commensurate with responsibilities to enable them effectively manage forest resources.

Inadequate dialogue and mistrust between local governments and other local actors and Forestry Officials is another challenge to decentralised forest management. Local government officials were accused of allocating forest land for private tree planting to 'outsiders' without due consideration of local residents. On the other hand, forestry officials interviewed felt that staff from local organisations are not conversant with technical aspects of forest management. This shows that technical forestry staff have not accepted the challenges associated with a shift in responsibilities to non-professional actors. It is thus important for forestry staff to realise that when adequate technical capacity does not exist in local organisations, it should be built during the decentralisation process. In practical terms, learning by doing will continue to remain one of the main ways organisations build technical capacity in decentralisation of forest management. The more local organisations get involved in the management of forest resources, the better they build their capacity. According to Gronow and Shretha (1991), forestry staff must recognise local organisations as active participants in decision-making over forests resources for effective decentralised forest governance.

Another challenge identified by respondents was lack of clear tenure over forest resources on private land. It was noted that commercial harvesting of forest produce from private forests, and other trees growing on farmers' land, requires a licence from the District Forest Office. This contravenes the provisions under the 2001 Forest Policy that guarantee ownership of tree resources to the owners of the land (MWLE, 2001a). In Uganda, reserved trees, for example, *Milicia excelsa* grow on farmers' land, but harvesting control is handled by forestry staff. This is a critical challenge to the District Forestry Services and National Forestry Authority staff in the implementation of private tree planting because people have no incentive for planting and protecting such trees that they cannot control their exploitation. Lack of secure ownership of trees and the fact that land owners have to acquire permits and licences for the use of forest produce on their own land discourages local participation in forestry programmes. In Tororo District, people uprooted reserved trees in favour of food and cash crops and other trees, because they are able to control their exploitation. In Mpigi, Mukono

and Hoima districts, a greater proportion of private natural forests were cleared in favour of crop production.

As noted by Banana and Gombya-Ssembajjwe (1995) and Meijerink (1997), secure forest tenure is an important incentive that stimulates individuals and private sector involvement in forestry. According to Ostrom (1990) and Beland and Platteau (1996), individuals are more likely to conserve a resource when they believe they will reap long-term benefits from it. Well-defined property rights with respect to forest use motivate producers to make long-term investments and use harvesting techniques that permit sustained production of forest products and services (Ostrom et al. 1993, Arnold 1998, Watts 2002). There is thus a need to harmonise government policies to specify forest resource ownership on privately owned land. This will create public interest in tree planting as well as give local authorities an opportunity to implement decentralised forest management.

The findings also reveal that forestry staff corruptly deal with offenders or participate in direct theft of the forest resource. It was noted that some illegally impounded forest produce in the districts of Mpigi and Mukono is sold in the nearby towns by forestry staff for their personal gain. It was also noted that equipment such as saws impounded by forestry staff are returned back to forest offenders. As with other civil servants in Uganda, the remuneration of forestry staff is generally low compared to the value of the resource being managed. A Forest Guard is paid a monthly salary of about 60,000 Uganda Shillings (US\$33) (Birakwate 2003). As a result, they are tempted to take bribes and other non-official rewards. The involvement of the forestry staff for their personal gain has made local authorities lose confidence in their capacity to facilitate the decentralisation of forests. This has partly forced some local people to take advantage of the situation to illegally exploit forest produce to further their individual interests. According to Conroy et al. (2002), widespread bribery and corruption among forest rule enforcers make their activities susceptible to abuse and they are often not taken seriously by forest users.

Another factor hindering decentralised forestry is the involvement of democratically elected local politicians (local councillors) and people connected with the state in plundering forest resources. This is common with soldiers, who coerce and threaten forest law enforcers when they are found in possession of illegally obtained forest produce. Forests also suffer from degradation during elections because local politicians support forest offenders as a strategy to win support for political positions. It was also noted that local politicians exert pressure on forestry staff to grant permits and licences to local people, who are easy to manipulate. This situation makes the forestry staff more vulnerable should they go against the wishes of the local politicians, thus undermining the work of National Forestry Authority and District Forestry Services in monitoring forest resources. As noted by Shepherd (1992), self restraint involved in sustainable local forest management goes away quickly when there is lack of respect for forest enforcement agencies. Furthermore, corruption and lack of respect for law undermine the work of forestry staff involved in the

implementation of decentralised forest governance (World Bank 1997, Kaimowitz 2003).

## CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The following conclusions can be drawn from this study:

- 1) Local organisations strategically promoted decentralisation of forest management functions such as collaborative forest management, tree planting, environmental education, forest policing, beekeeping and integrated planning that are core themes of the 2001 Uganda Forest Policy.
- 2) Linkages have been established amongst local organisations to exchange information, mobilise and access resources for decentralised forest management and to improve local stakeholder-central government relations in the management of forest resources.
- 3) Both financial and non-financial incentives such as the desire to control forest degradation, donor and central government funding, awareness of the importance of forestry to the livelihoods of communities, the desire to conserve forest resources and rehabilitate the degraded areas motivated local organisations to undertake decentralised forest management.
- 4) Local governments and support organisations function as implementing agents for the central government, whose performance relies heavily on the legal and fiscal power transfers from the national government. Support organisations have not been given mandate to formulate forest policies, and have no discretionary powers over most strategic activities such as the issuing of permits and licenses for forest exploitation, and authority to apprehend and prosecute forest offenders.
- 5) Lack of a clear policy on the ownership and control of trees and forest resources, unequal sharing of revenue from forest resources between the local governments and central government and political inference, corrupt forestry staff, mistrust between forestry staff and local actors and inadequate delegation of decision-making powers over forest management to local actors are the challenges hindering local organisations to implement decentralised forest management in Uganda.

The following recommendations are made from this study:

- 1) The on-going collaboration between local governments, research institutes, civil society organisations and the National Forestry Authority involvement in decentralised forest management needs to be strengthened. Such support improves and reinforces the capacity of local governments and civil society groups to sustainably manage

forest resources.

- 2) Financial incentives for improved local government performance such as donor and central government funds need to strengthen the capacity and ability of local governments and support organisations to be economically independent, and to ensure that these incentives are not restrained by the donor and central governmental fiscal transfer system.
- 3) Local governments and other community organisations should be sufficiently authorised and legally empowered to resolve forest-related conflicts, apprehend and fine forest offenders, and trained in policy analysis and advocacy and forest monitoring to effectively implement the core themes of the 2001 Forest Policy under decentralisation.
- 4) There is a need for the central government to recognise the rights of local organisations to control fiscal resources, and equitably share benefits from forest resources and to arrest and prosecute forest offenders because this will strengthen collective responsibility for protecting the forests as well as budgetary commitment to the implementation of decentralised forest management.

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