

## **PROTECTED AREA SYSTEMS IN UGANDA:**

- Issues
- Threats
- Challenges

Issues of Protected Areas in Uganda are very broad term. In Uganda Protected Areas refer to:

- Forests/ grasslands
- Wildlife
- Wetlands
- Biological diversity issues

Protected Areas are areas whose use is restricted. They are guided by laws, statutes and legislations. They can be for income generation.

### **Examples of Protected Areas in Uganda:**

- National Parks: e.g Queen Elizabeth N.P., Murchison Falls N.P., Kidepo Valley N.P. Bwindi-Mgahinga, Lake Mburo etc
- Forest Reserves: e.g. Mabira, Budongo,
- Wildlife Reserves: e.g. Semuliki, Pian Upe, Katonga, Kigezi wildlife reserve.
- Forest Parks: e.g. Kibale
- Controlled hunting areas and sanctuaries: e.g. Bokora corridor, Karuma, Pian Upe
- Game Sanctuaries: e.g. Rhino Camp in Arua, znd Zoka in Nebbi
- Man and Biosphere Reserves: e.g. L.George,
- Wetlands
- World Heritage Sites: Mt. Rwenzori N.P. ans Mgahinga and Bwindi N.P.

### **Areas of concern in Uganda:**

- Contribution of protected areas to sustainable development in Uganda {benefits}
- Perceptions and attitudes of local people to Protected areas
- Conflict resolution with local people
- Lead agencies (NEMA, UWA, Forest Dept.)
- Legal status of protected areas
- Capacity building in Protected Areas (Protected Area professionals).

Wildlife reserves are mainly adjacent to National parks. In most cases they are buffer zones between the local people and the Protected Areas.

## **NATIONAL PARKS:**

These cover slightly over 4.6% total area of Uganda and are characterised by wildlife resources. There are also forest resources within National Parks. Uganda is rich in wildlife resources which occur in both protected and private or public ungazetted land. There are four types of wildlife Protected Areas:

- National Parks

- Wildlife reserves
- Controlled hunting areas
- Wildlife sanctuaries and community wildlife areas.

The National Parks in Uganda are funded mainly by donors i.e. Branch Management Unit. i.e. Integrated conservation and development projects in each of the National Parks such as increasing awareness in local communities and enhancing conservation of these systems as well as enhancing benefits to the people. Such donor organisations include:-

- IUCN: Conservation of endangered species e.g. White Rhino, Crested Crane, Mountain Gorilla etc, e.g. in Semuliki, Kibale, Bwindi-Mgahinga National Park.
- WWF: E.G. Mt. Rwenzori conservation and Development Programme.
- Care-DTC: Bwindi-Mgahiinga National Parks.
- GTZ/GIZ: Kidepo and Murchison Falls National Parks.
- AWF: L. Mburo National Park for conservation education.

#### **Benefits of National Parks:**

- Ecotourism (as opposed to mass tourism which helps local people is more friendly to the environment )
- Increase local peoples' incomes through employment e.g rangers, guides, cooks, craft selling etc
- Sources of materials e.g. timber, fuel wood, plywood etc
- Basis of rural development
- Infrastructure development
- Education, Research, and training
- Protection of plants and animals e.g. for medicines
- Maintaining biodiversity
- Protection of landscapes, cultural and historical sites, watersheds etc.

#### **Problems of National Parks (Problems pertaining to sustainability of wildlife)**

- Population pressure
- Encroachment and poaching especially in Queen Elizabeth N.P., M.T. Elgon, Rwenzori and Kibale National Parks. Expanding fishing industries e.g. villages within the parks such as L. Katwe in Queen Elizabeth N.P.
- Inadequate financial resources e.g. corruption in UWA therefore failing to function as government no longer gives it subsidies. UWA is the lead government agency in wildlife management and over 70 % of its budget is donor funded as grants.
- Tourist behaviour. E.g. Wildlife Safaris from South Africa was given concessions to work in Kyambura and Kidepo but were instead trading in ostrich eggs in Kidepo. Their license was subsequently cancelled.
- Poaching has made some animals extinct e.g. the White Rhino in Rhino Camp in West Nile. These animals were endemic in Uganda. (Some were sold to Australia and Europe and buying one back costs more than 2 million dollars!)

#### **Future of National Parks:**

Is bright but there are big issues of management. There is need for continuous and adequate

funding. There is also need to consider giving private concessions to manage National Parks.

### **Examples of National Parks in Uganda:**

- **Bwindi Impenetrable National Park:**

It was gazetted in 1961 as an animal sanctuary. In 1987 it was upgraded to a National Park and covers an area of 301 Km<sup>2</sup>. Bwindi is one of the largest forests in East Africa and has over 400 tree species. It has a complicated landscape which is very undulating. It is the richest in terms of biodiversity of species variation in Uganda because of varying drainage, soils, altitudes, temperature (sometimes up to 0°). In terms of management, the undulation is a problem i.e. communication problem in terms of monitoring the activities. However monitoring stations have been set up in the different blocks for purposes of easing management. The blocks are well equipped with radio stations for management purposes.

DTC Care International project operates in Bwindi N.P. relating the local communities around e.g. how the community benefits from the national park. However population density around the area is a threat to the management of the park.

- **Lake Mbuoro National Park:**

Was gazetted in 1982 as a game reserve and covers an area of 206 Km<sup>2</sup>. As a game reserve, pastoralists were allowed to graze in the protected area. It was thus made a National Park and grazing by livestock was restricted. It receives rainfall amounts of approximately 832 mm i.e. low. Therefore is a grassland area i.e. rangelands. People living around the park are pastoralists.

#### **Management problems:**

- The National Park contains approximately 300 species of birds, buffaloes, hippos etc. therefore there is competition for resources by animals (wild and domestic).
- Historical tensions exist where the King of the area used to allow people to graze their animals in the protected area. Therefore gazetting has created problems/tension.
- Conflicts have led to poisoning of animals especially lions which destroy livestock.
- Low funding of the park by government
- Fires set by pastoralists for pasture regeneration.
- High cattle population around therefore need for creating grazing land within the park.

#### **Prospects:**

- The area is suitable for rangeland grazing land use (wildlife landuse)
- Fishing is allowed in the lakes.

- **KIDEPO NATIONAL PARK**

Found in Karamoja region and was established in 1962 and approximately 840 km from Kampala. Karamoja is the most remote part of Uganda. The park is divided into six zones: Extensive zone, Tourist and fire management zone, Law and enforcement zone, Intermediate zone, Conservation zone and Buffer zone. Its main objective was to promote tourism for revenue generation.

#### **Problems:**

- The long distance and poor transport discourages tourists. It is far on road and expensive

by air. Preference is therefore given to nearby parks like Murchison Falls N.P.

- It is also the most remote area of Uganda and local inhabitants around are gun-wielding nomadic pastoralists, therefore presence of insecurity.
- Limited accommodation e.g. Apoka Guest camp with only 32 beds which cannot contain many guests.
- Four camping sites near Apoka but lions are present around.
- Little or no food in the area. Visitors have to carry their own food and this discourages them. Local people have guns therefore hunt park animals
- Bush fires in the park in the dry season.

#### **Prospects:**

- Accommodation is being addressed by the government e.g. Grand Katarum lodge being constructed by the government.
- Plans to provide food in order to attract more tourists.
- Charter aircraft being used to transport tourists instead of risking road transport.
- World Bank loans being received to manage the National Park for activities such as purchasing vehicles to monitor and control poaching and for transporting tourists.
- More incentives being given to wildlife workers.
- Veterinarians regularly visit the park and treat animals.
- Advertisement of Kidepo National Park for those with interest to visit the park.
- Exists in a natural ecosystem not greatly disturbed by man.

#### **FOREST RESERVES:**

Are of two categories:

- Tropical high forests
- Plantation forests

The two have different management systems in relation to Protected Areas. Plantations belong to the people and communities e.g. Namanve while the tropical high forests are managed by the government. In 1890 forest and wetlands covered 10.8 million hectares on Uganda i.e. 45% of the land of Uganda. Today they cover less than 20.3 % i.e. reduced to less than half. A 3% population rate increase in Uganda is a threat to the forests. Reduction in forest area is due to factors such as:-

- Population pressure
- Breakdown in law and order during periods of civil war and unrest
- Increased demand for forest products e.g. timber, poles, fibres, charcoal etc.
- International trade issues e.g. demand for more production etc.

#### **Issues pertaining to forestry/problems:**

- Pests and disease control especially plantation forests (pine forests in Jinja and Masindi).
- Deforestation.
- Harvesting and processing practices which are not sustainable e.g.
  - when one needs one pole five other stems are cut down in the process (destruction and wastage)
  - Pit sawing which is a bad practice because it destroys other trees around.

- Consumption habits of forest resources. People are very wasteful e.g. when you want part of a tree, the whole tree is felled down.

#### **Focus on protecting forests as National Parks:**

- **Security:** Since National Parks are constituted by the Act of parliament and managed by a board of trustees, they are more secure than the forests (legal back up by government), as opposed to forest reserves which are created by a Chief civil servant e.g. the Forestry Commissioner.
- **Effective management:** National Parks have no conflicting interests in promoting consumptive forms of resource life. Therefore having more effective management because the rules and regulations are very clear.
- **Provision for protection of both plants and animals:** In a forest reserve focus is mainly on protection of animals while in a National Park both animal and plant life are given due attention in conservation work.
- **Expertise and experience:** Uganda National Parks (Uganda Wildlife Authority) have a long period of expertise such that they have developed the necessary capacity.
- **International recognition:** National Parks can attract more international support from foreign donors and countries as compared to forest reserves.

#### **Disadvantages of having Protected Areas in the forest reserves other than the National Park:**

- Uganda Wildlife Authority has little experience in regulating the consumptive uses of resources in the National Parks despite provisions which are made.
- The economic and social benefits through consumptive resource exploitation may not be justified by the benefits of preservation/protection created by the National Parks.
- Uganda Wildlife Authority lacks institutional capacity to manage additional Parks.
- Transfers of custodianship between Uganda Wildlife Authority and the Forestry Department may cause conflicts.

## **WETLANDS:**

In Uganda they are categorised into the following:

- Papyrus Swamps e.g. Kibimba and Mpologoma swamps
- Swamp forests: e.g. around L. Victoria such as Kajansi, around Kisubi in Entebbe, and in Kayunga.
- Riverine Wetlands: Have papyrus and trees as well.
- Lake edges.
- Artificial wetlands, (very few).

A study by the National Biodiversity Study revealed that wetlands occupy about 30.100 Km<sup>2</sup>

There are two broad classifications of wetland systems:

- Natural Lake (Lacustrine swamp lands or wetlands) e.g. around L. Victoria
- Riverine and flood plain wetlands e.g. Kibimba and Mpologoma swamps between River Mpologoma and L. Kyoga.

#### **Benefits of Wetlands:**

- Helps in regulating and conserving of water.
- Sedimentation and Nutrient trapping
- Climate modification: Land and sea breezes and micro-climate control
- Habitat for flora and fauna e.g. frogs, snakes, fish, birds etc and many plants
- Provide services and products e.g. drinking water, grazing land, clay for brick making, fish for food, poles, papyrus for making mats etc

### **Legal Status:**

Since 1994, there have been significant policy developments for wetland management e.g.

- Wetland Management Program funded by the Netherlands government.
- National Environment Statute has laws which protect wetlands.
- National Wetlands Policy

### **Problems facing wetlands.**

- Population pressure. Wetlands are drained to establish farmlands especially for rice farming in the Busoga and Pallisa districts.
- Over-harvesting of wetland products. E.g. wetland poles that take longer to mature, cost more than other poles such as Eucalyptus therefore more marketable. This subjects them to over-exploitation.
- Increasing levels of pollution of water by pollutants. They are good in refining toxic materials but eventually get strained and therefore polluted e.g. where Nakivubo channel drains into L. Victoria
- Establishment of industrial areas e.g. Ntinda, Kyambogo, Nakawa, Nalukolongo and Entebbe Road in Kampala.

### **Game Reserves and Animal Sanctuaries:**

Their status is provided in the statute concerning protection of Protected Areas. They protect vertebrates which can only be captured or killed with permission of the game warden. However this provision was superseded by later legislation which outlawed all hunting of wildlife.

Advantages of dual status in forest reserves, national parks and game reserves are

- Both plants and animals are protected.
- Greater protection is afforded to the area by departments of forestry and Uganda wildlife authority of monitoring, protection, funding etc.
- Greater control over livestock.
- Scrutiny of activities by both departments is ensured hence reducing the possibility of environmental degradation of the ecosystem, thus greater overall control of these areas.

Disadvantages:

- Administratively inefficient and expensive to manage due to duplication of funding, duties, functions etc.
- Confusion among local communities regarding their rights and management of the Protected Areas. E.g. they can have some rights to extract some resources from the forest reserve but at the same time presence of the game reserve or National Park may not require them to get any resource from the game reserve, or competition for some of the resources between the people and animals within the forest reserve e.g. grazing areas and watering points. i.e. one department may allow them to use a resource and the other department does not allow them to use the resource leading to conflict in resource use.
- Conflicts and jealousies may exist or arise between the two departments e.g. due to funding, provision of vehicles, better payment of workers of one department than the other etc.

### **Nature Reserves:**

Forest Nature reserves are areas of forest reserves designated by the forest department to be protected from all forms of extractive resource use. Forest Nature reserves gain their protective status from the Forest Act, Art. 13.

Nature reserves are subject to minimal management interventions e.g. controlled burning of any grassland, boundary demarcation, maintenance of essential trails/tracks, and control of any abnormal animal population especially when their population increases abnormally and can therefore be transferred elsewhere. However because of their small size, nature reserves have proved to be highly vulnerable to degradation. Because of such constraints in forest nature reserve management, Mt. Elgon Forest Reserve is one of the nature reserves that were changed to a National Park.