Securing tenure rights to communal forests in Masindi district, Uganda

LESSONS FROM PARTICIPATORY PROSPECTIVE ANALYSIS

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Key messages

- The Participatory Prospective Analysis (PPA) process in Masindi district in Uganda's Western Region brought together stakeholders from government, the private sector, NGOs and local communities to collectively reflect on factors affecting local tenure rights, forecast future scenarios and propose actionable plans for securing forest tenure rights.
- Participants identified several factors threatening local forest tenure rights. These included: lack of land ownership documentation; inadequate implementation and enforcement of forest policies, laws and programs; land use changes; gender bias against women; political interference; lack of community awareness of forest tenure rights; and inadequate financial and human resources to effectively protect local people's rights to forests and land.
- To identify potential barriers and drivers, three workshops were organized. With both forestry and agricultural sectors being male-dominated, one women-only workshop was organized to capture women's perspectives and compare findings with those of the mixed gender group.
- The two groups identified four key "driving forces" impacting forest tenure security: (1) community participation in forest tenure reform implementation, particularly that of women; (2) access to financial resources to implement forest tenure reform activities; (3) the importance of outside organizations having an awareness of community, cultural and institutional norms and beliefs regarding forest tenure rights; (4) the role played by local and national government agencies and politicians in coordinating and promoting progress towards forest tenure reforms.

- Women stakeholders emphasized the importance of access to land for forestry activities as critical to securing their rights; they also noted that supportive men and domestic relationships can impact on women's rights to forest land. Mixed group stakeholders identified the role of oil, gas and other industrial activities as a key threat to local forest tenure security.
- Participants developed four scenarios to anticipate potential future situations impacting on local forest tenure rights. Desirable scenarios depicted a well-governed, well-financed forestry sector characterized by gender equality and participative forest management. Undesirable scenarios were characterized by a dominant oil and gas sector undermining forest sustainability and forest rights; a weak, underfunded and poorly-managed forest sector; forest conversion to other uses; government failure to recognize community rights and integrate communities in forest management; and disappointed, disempowered communities collectively destroying forests for survival instead of managing them sustainably.
- Several actions were identified to secure local forest tenure rights: 1) making district-level government more responsive to local needs and aspirations around community forest tenure reforms; 2) increasing the number of well-trained district government officers and providing adequate financial resources; 3) facilitating a faster and affordable process for community forest registration, including community incentives; 4) equipping communities with knowledge, skills and resources to enhance their participation in forest tenure reform implementation; 5) promoting environmentally and socially responsible investments to mobilize resources for protecting local people's forest tenure rights.

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Introduction

With the adoption of Uganda's new Constitution in the 1990s, the country ushered in several reforms to forest and land tenure systems, characterized by a return to the recognition of kingdom land, and an expanded scope of forest-dependent people's rights. To implement and achieve these reforms, the Forest Sector Support Department (FSSD) and National Forestry Authority (NFA) were established and respectively tasked with policy-making and implementation. Since the early 2000s, technical and financial support from national and international NGOs has enabled the government to implement diverse forest management approaches, with the intention of expanding local communities' (and other actors') rights to use and manage forests; by increasing their stake in forests the aim is to encourage more sustainable use and management of them. Despite this political and financial impetus, numerous challenges prevent significant progress being made in community forest tenure security.

In this context, a multi-stakeholder consultative process known as Participatory Prospective Analysis (PPA) was undertaken, as part of the Global Comparative Study (GCS) on Forest Tenure Reform and Forest Dependent Communities led by the Center for International Forestry Research (CIFOR). It was implemented in partnership with Makerere University and the Association of Ugandan Professional Women in Agriculture and Environment. This flyer details the process undertaken, as well as the threats to forest tenure security that it identified, potential future scenarios and proposed actions to secure tenure rights for local forest-dependent communities in Masindi district (hereinafter referred to as Masindi) in Uganda's Western Region. Masindi has high rates of deforestation and is home to communities with limited access to nearby forest resources.

Methodology - The PPA process

Participatory Prospective Analysis (PPA) workshops were used to facilitate a multi-stakeholder participatory identification of forest tenure security scenarios and to elaborate a series of actions in response to the scenarios identified. The PPA process comprises five steps:

1. **Defining the "system"**
   Stakeholders begin by clarifying four dimensions of the issue to be addressed: what, where, how long and who? These four dimensions define what is called a system.
2. **Detecting and defining "forces of change"**
   Stakeholders identify and define forces of change, which could be a program, factor, policy, law, management practice, issue or activity.
3. **Identifying and selecting "driving forces"**
   Stakeholders prioritize the forces of change, selecting driving forces that they can focus on within the constraints of time, technical, financial
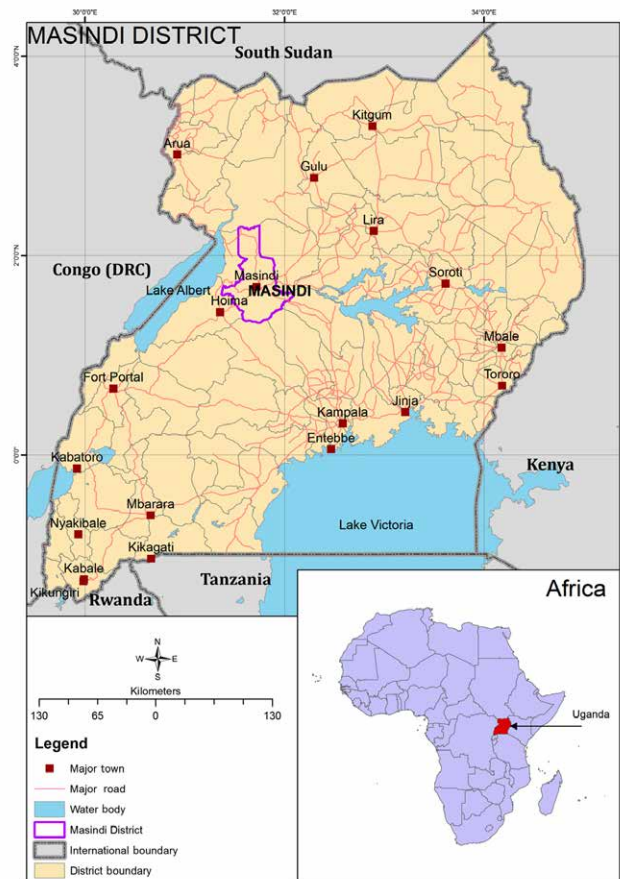

Figure 1. *Location of Masindi district, Uganda (Source: Dennis Ojwang 2017)*

and other resources. The driving forces have the highest capacity to transform the system, in whichever direction.
4. **Building scenarios**
   Rather than being a prediction or a forecast, a scenario is an anticipation of a possible future transformation, through the exploration of alternative paths that the driving forces could take. Scenarios are categorized into desirable or undesirable.
5. **Elaborating a foresight-based action plan**
   Participants elaborate an action plan based on the desired scenario, identifying relevant actions for attaining the desired scenario, and discussing proposed actions.

In Masindi, the PPA process was conducted in two three-day workshops, with a third one-day workshop to validate findings and agree on action plans. The first workshop covering steps 1–2 above was held 21–23 September 2015; the second focused on steps 3–5 and was held 10–12 November 2015. A total of 24 participants (21 men, 3 women) attended the workshops, with the feedback workshop attracting 28 participants (22 men, 6 women). Because the forestry sector is male-dominated, women's participation was very low. To ensure women's perspectives and interests were considered, 15 women attended a women-only workshop covering steps 1–2, which was held 16–18 August 2016.

Participants at these workshops represented a cross-section of local government stakeholders, including District Forest Services (DFS), National Forestry Authority (NFA), Departments of Natural Resources, Culture and Community Development; other participants included political leaders, NGOs / Community-based Organizations (CBOs), teachers, community members, cultural leaders, religious leaders, police, students and media.

Outcomes of the PPA process

Defining the system

In defining the issue to be addressed (the system), stakeholders considered local people's rights under various district-wide forest management systems. The forest tenure systems implemented in Masindi include Customary Forests, Collaborative Forest Management, Public Forests (central government forest reserves), Private Forest Management, and Community Forest Management.

Mixed group stakeholders defined the system as "forest tenure security for the people of Masindi district until 2025, but with a review after five years." Forest tenure security was defined as "local people's forest and land tenure rights being well-protected into the foreseeable future." Ten years was the agreed timeframe to consider both feasibility for action and the ability to foresee changes.

Women stakeholders agreed on a different definition, choosing instead to define the system as "forest tenure security for women in Masindi within the next five years and upheld for forty years."

This is a marked difference from the expectation of the mixed group, with women desiring forest tenure security to be achieved in half the timeframe, and expressing expectation that tenure rights should also be guaranteed for future generations. Both groups agreed on periodic reviews of five years.

Forces of change

The mixed group identified 32 forces of change while the women-only workshop identified 35. These were categorized into internal and external forces. Internal forces arise from the context within the district, over which stakeholders have more control. External forces are those arising from outside the district, over which stakeholders have little or no influence (e.g. climate change or natural catastrophes). Internal forces of change were further grouped into social forces (e.g. cultural norms on land inheritance), technical forces (e.g. boundary demarcation), economic forces (e.g. financial resources for forest tenure reform implementation), and policy factors (e.g. political influence). The PPA process adopts definitions agreed by participants based on local context, rather than basing them on text-book or scholarly definitions.

Driving forces

Mixed group stakeholders identified five key driving forces to be used in development scenarios in the next step (Table 1), while the women-only stakeholders identified eight. The two groups shared four common key driving forces, while the mixed group had one unique key driving force, and the women identified three unique key driving forces.

The shared driving forces were: 1) community participation in forest tenure reform implementation, paying special attention to women's skills and involvement in planning and implementing activities aimed at securing forest tenure rights; 2) access to financial resources for implementing forest tenure reform activities (such as registration); 3) communities' awareness of their forest tenure rights and the role of cultural institutions, norms and beliefs in securing them;

Table 1. Selected key driving forces

No.	DRIVING FORCE	DEFINITION
1	Role of government agencies	The government is the lead agency in implementing or enforcing policies, laws and programs related to forest tenure security.
2	Community participation in forest management, including the role of women	The level of community involvement in planning, implementing, decision-making, and monitoring decisions related to forest tenure security of forest-dependent communities; including the knowledge, attitudes, and role of women in forestry management.
3	Oil and gas and other industrial activities	The nature and impact of oil, gas and other industrial activities on the environment, forest tenure security, and peoples' livelihoods; including the role of private sector in forest tenure security.
4	Access to financial resources	Availability of funds accessible to communities and forest agencies for forest tenure reform implementation and payment for ecosystem services (incentives/economic value attached to forest conservation e.g. carbon trading).
5	Cultural institutions, norms, beliefs and practices	Individual and collective views relating to forest tenure security, based on customs and practices. The role played by cultural institutions in forest tenure security.

4) the role of government (local, district and national) agencies and politicians in coordinating and promoting progress in forest tenure reforms.

Women stakeholders emphasized the importance of their access to land for forestry activities as a crucial factor in securing their forest rights. They also identified supportive men and domestic relationships as critical for women's tenure rights. The mixed group identified the role of oil, gas and other industrial activities as a key driving force impacting forest tenure security in Masindi.

Scenarios of the future

Participants outlined descriptions of how forest tenure security in Masindi may unfold in future, basing these on a set of assumptions about the "states" of the key driving forces. The state of a driving force refers to how it will evolve in future, either becoming a supporting or limiting factor for forest tenure security. Participants deduced states for all five selected driving forces and considered those which were more and less desirable, before developing four scenarios, one ideal (Scenario 1) and three (Scenarios 2, 3 and 4) that diverge from the ideal, having with mixed positive and negative results. The four scenarios illustrate stakeholders' aspirations for securing local tenure rights and illuminate some of the main elements impacting tenure security. The scenarios also capture stakeholders' concerns about securing tenure rights in the future. Scenario 1 represents an ideal, envisioning a well-governed forestry sector characterized by stakeholder participation, provisions of incentives for sustainable forest management, adequate budgets for tenure reform implementation, organized communities and women's involvement in decision making and leadership, with substantial support from cultural institutions that enforce their inheritance and land ownership rights.

The rest of the scenarios diverge from this ideal in profound ways that are rooted in current realities. For example, Scenario 2 envisions a responsible private sector (dominant oil and gas sector), which stimulates broader economic development but also supports sustainable forest and land management. An unsupportive public sector, however, leaves forestry weak, underfunded and subject to corruption. Conversion of forests to other land uses, and failure to recognize community rights, results in communities collectively destroying forests rather than managing them sustainably.

In contrast, in Scenario 3 it is "business as usual" and government policies do not secure the tenure rights of forest-dependent communities and leave communities out of policy planning. The forestry sector instead oversees implementation of policies that, like Scenario 2, results in forest allocation to other sectors, especially oil and gas companies and other private investors. Reforms that have the potential for securing tenure rights of communities are not prioritized, and there is recentralization of forest management authority. Cultural institutions are also extinguished. As in Scenario 2, the management authority loses legitimacy, and communities have no incentive to sustainably manage forests so instead destroy forests.

Scenario 4 envisions government failure to secure tenure rights of local people, parrticularly those of women. However, this prompts women to become active in tenure reform implementation. Women's forest tenure rights and their involvement in reform implementation are supported by cultural institutions, which allow women to inherit and own land. In this scenario, women are empowered and knowledgeable about their rights. They are fully involved in governance

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SCENARIO 1. FORESTRY SECTOR GOVERNANCE PARADISE

This scenario envisions a corruption-free, well-funded and coordinated forestry sector that effectively involves all state and non-state stakeholders in forest tenure reform implementation, while properly allocating sufficient budgets to activities aimed at securing local communities' forest tenure rights. This scenario sees:
- Increased funding for the forestry sector from government, donors, private sector and other innovative financing mechanisms.
- Good coordination between different sectors and government departments, all working towards attaining forest tenure security for local people.
- A responsible private sector that compensates for the environmental impact of their investments in an adequate and timely manner.
- Government support for Masindi District Biodiversity Fund and Tree Fund initiatives to increase forest cover.
- Existence of clear forest/land use policies, laws and plans, which are fully implemented and monitored.
- Recruitment of more forestry staff trained on forest tenure reform implementation, and particularly on working with communities.
- Registration of Private and Community Forests completed.
- Organized community groups managing forestry resources and sharing benefits equitably.
- Empowered women participating in decision-making and taking up 60% of leadership positions on local organizations and institutions working on forest tenure security issues.
- A supportive cultural institution actively working with other stakeholders to promote and secure tenure rights of local people.

at all levels, and supported by men who ensure their rights are protected. As a result, women also benefit from forestry through an application of equitable benefit-sharing arrangements among members of the community.

Taken together, these scenarios illustrate the stakeholders' perspectives on tenure security and forest tenure reform implementation. The scenarios suggest the dominance of oil and gas is associated with a weakening of the forestry sector, forests being allocated for oil, gas and other commercial activities, and overall insecure community tenure rights. Benefits from forest resources such as income from selling forest products and incentive mechanisms are seen to be key in securing the forest tenure rights of communities. Within communities, women's tenure rights merit particular attention; cultural institutions are central to the exercise and securing of women's rights. The scenarios also suggest that a well-resourced forestry agency, with adequate budgets and staff to enforce rights, is necessary for local tenure security.

Table 2. Proposed actions for promoting forest tenure security in Masindi district, Uganda.

DRIVING FORCE	PROPOSED ACTIONS	RESPONSIBLE AGENCY
Role of government agencies	Making local government agencies more responsive to community interests by: - Training local government agents on their roles in forest tenure reform implementation, particularly how to effectively serve communities - Empower communities to demand accountability by raising awareness of their rights and roles in forest tenure reform implementation - Popularize policies and laws related to forest / land tenure reforms and the rights of local communities, by developing and disseminating public-friendly versions, using print and electronic media	Chief Administrative Office District Forest Office Community Development Office Sub County Chiefs District Forest Office Non-Government Organizations (NGOs) Community Development Office District Forest Office Community Development Office NGOs Sub County Chiefs

Access to financial resources	1. Human and financial resource mobilization:
	  - Lobbying for increased government budget allocation towards forest tenure reform, particularly reforms that recognize forest-dependent communities' rights
	2. Operationalize alternative funding sources to support forest tenure reform implementation including:
	  - The Tree Fund and Masindi Biodiversity Conservation Fund
	  - Payment for ecosystem service schemes
	  - Polluter-pays principle, whereby all investors will be required to compensate for their pollution
	  - Promote establishment of commercial tree nurseries
	3. Institute a requirement that private investors remit a certain percentage of revenues to support communities and the forestry sector in the district
		District Natural Resources Office
		District Forest Office
		District Council
		NGOs
		District Planning Office
		District Natural Resources Office
		District Forest Office
		National Environment Management Authority (NEMA)
		NGOs
		
		District Council
		District Finance Department

Roles and effects of oil, gas and other industries	- Promote more environmentally responsible investments in the district, including establishing a tree-planting policy for industries - Promote public-private partnerships for supporting tenure reform implementation - Carry out Environmental Impact Assessments (EIAs) before infrastructural development	District Council Chief Administrative Office District Commercial Office (NEMA) District Environment Office
Community participation in forest management (including women)	- Empower communities to demand accountability - Involve communities in local government (planning process, petitions speaker) - Involve the whole community, including women and young people, in forest management - Empower women and young people to take up leadership positions at community and lower government levels with regards to tenure reform implementation	District Non-Government Forum Community Development Office NGOs District Forest Office Community Development Office NGOs
Cultural institutions, norms and beliefs	Sensitize community to ignore outdated cultural norms, such as barring women from inheriting land and trees, and encourage the community to embrace modernity	Bunyoro Kingdom District Community Development office NGOs

Finally, the scenarios seem to point to the necessity of involving multiple actors at different levels of governance, as well as community and cultural institutions, in order for local community rights to be secure. Indeed, they indicate that recentralization and vesting authority in one actor, while excluding others, is likely to result in negative outcomes.

Action plan

Participants in the PPA exercise proposed, debated and decided on action plans that would advance the desired scenarios and mitigate the undesired scenario. The strategies presented are organized in Table 2, and correspond to key driving forces impacting local forest tenure security. The proposed action plans include specific actions, as well as the people or organizations responsible for implementation. Table 3 presents the actions proposed by the women at the women-only PPA workshop.

Conclusion

The Participatory Prospective Analysis process brought together multiple stakeholders to consider the future forest tenure security of local communities in Masindi district, resulting in an action plan to tackle identified driving forces over the next ten years.

Stakeholders identified a number of threats to forest tenure rights, including the uncontrolled expansion of the oil and gas sector and other industries (sugarcane and ethanol). Inadequate financial resources for the forestry sector and a lack of community involvement in forest management (particularly

that of women) were highlighted as signs of limited governmental effectiveness. Lastly, it was noted that cultural institutions can have significant influence in ensuring tenure security, when cultural norms and beliefs are respected.

Stakeholders devised responses to these challenges. Among them: making local government agencies more responsive to community interests; mobilizing human and financial resources; promoting more environmentally-friendly investments; strengthening community participation in forest management through involvement in activity planning, implementation and monitoring, as well as law enforcement; and encouraging the participation of women and cultural institutions.

Stakeholders proposed to integrate actions into the District Development Plan and use this to source funding for implementation, while regular activities, such as raising community awareness of forest tenure rights, would be undertaken by both government and non-government agencies. Community differentiation dictates that special attention is paid to women's tenure rights, and cultural institutions have a key role to play in this. Multi-actor collaboration and cooperation, rather than centralized, exclusive mandates, are essential to securing local tenure rights.

Acknowledgments

Table 3. In addition to the collectively-agreed action plans above, those below resulted from the women-only PPA workshop

DRIVING FORCE	PROPOSED ACTIONS	RESPONSIBLE AGENCY
Supportive men and domestic relationships	• Sensitize men on the benefits and value of supporting women in forest ownership, management and use • Encourage increased male participation in securing women's tenure rights • Encourage good relationships in homes and between relatives (clans) with help of religious and cultural leaders • Encourage mixed-gender village development groups and also recognize model homes and family projects	District Community Development Office District Forest Office Religious and cultural leaders District/Sub County Community Development Office NGOs and CBOs
Technical skills for women	• Equip more women with natural resources management skills e.g. training on tree nursery establishment and management, planting of trees and sustainable use of forests. Make forest and conservation training institutions and schools more gender sensitive	District Forest Officer NGOs Forestry training institutes
Access to finance	• Sensitize and raise awareness of women to form savings and credit groups. Encourage NGOs to support women in forestry management	District Community Development (Gender) Office NGOs
Access to land	• Establish a lobbying platform for women to own parental land • Government institutions at parish, sub-county and district level to allocate plots to women by communities • NFA to give women plots to plant boundary trees	District Community Development (Gender) Office NGOs Local councils at all levels National Forest Authority

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