DECENTRALISATION, PARTICIPATION AND ACCOUNTABILITY: ANALYSING COLLABORATIVE MANAGEMENT MODELS FOR MT. ELGON NATIONAL PARK AND MABIRA FOREST RESERVE IN UGANDA

PREPARED FOR THE WORLD RESOURCES INSTITUTE (WRI)

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Submitted May 15 2001

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ABSTRACT

This article on Decentralisation, Participation and Accountability focuses on collaborative natural resource management for Mabira Eco-tourism and Mount Elgon Conservation projects in Uganda. The article explores whether collaborative management as one way of decentralising natural resource management funtions is a better avenue for community participation and whether it enhances downward accountability. Critical issues that may promote or undermine community participation and accountability for effective natural resource management are also examined. Major linkages between central, local governments and other actors from the national to the local levels have been identified. The decentralisation policies, other environment laws and policies emphasise collaboration with communities as one way effective implementation of environmental activities. The establishment of the management committees as elected representatives of communities' under this new approach to conservation is examined. These are charged with ensuring institutional linkages with the communities to provide a better avenue for community participation and accountability. It is evident that participation of the community for example, in meetings, remains low and so does their ability to influence decisions implying that representatives are not downwardly accountable. Communities receive directives from the project staff and are more involved in sensitisation activities, which hardly accounts for participation. Although elections are a means of ensuring accountability, they are highly wanting in both projects. The means of holding representatives accountable are less known. The major influencing factors for community participation remain perceived benefits, level of need/interest and unaccountable representatives. Revenue sharing as a part of benefit sharing is decided by the state in terms of the amount and the mode of disbursement indicating limited community involvement. This is contrary to the democratic principles that empower and encourage active participation of all citizens at all levels in their own governance. Nevertheless, the benefits of collaborative management in the two projects cannot be disputed. They range from ecological to social outcomes, some of which can be directly attributed to institutional changes within collaborative management. However, there are also negative outcomes.

1.0 INTRODUCTION[2]

This article is premised on the argument that decentralisation brings government closer to the people and enhances participation at all levels (Blair 2000). Participation is important for empowerment, representation, poverty reduction and distribution of benefits. The idea behind decentralised natural resource management among environmentalists and promoters of local democracy hinges on reshaping institutional infrastructure and revenue generation (Ribot 2001). Lind (2001) has argued that environments are threatened with degradation, and has also indicated that institutional establishments will encourage participation and will promote best practices. The above presupposes that the local people are important partners in the implementation of decentralisation. However, institutional changes may not enhance community participation and accountability. There are other factors that determine the success of decentralised natural resource management. These include resource user participation in rule-making and influencing decisions, transparency in management, financial autonomy, adequate monitoring, transparent and legitimate conflict resolution mechanisms and sufficient knowledge and skills of natural resource managers (Winter, 1988 cited in Craig, 2000). Responsiveness of the policy-makers and implementers to the needs of the local people is also believed to enhance downward accountability. Participation is an incentive to communities who are the immediate users of the resources, and if these are not involved in any of the activities, they will always see these activities as external. In this article, the degree to which responsibilities for environmental management have been devolved to local actors, the kinds of powers local actors are receiving, how this power is expressed and exercised, how the actors and institutional changes generate participation and accountability and the impact of these on social and ecological outcomes are investigated.

Decentralisation policy is not new in the governance structure of Uganda. It was the mode of government during colonial administration. In 1949, the African Local Governments Ordinance was passed to effect transfer of greater responsibility upon African Local Authorities. This necessitated the establishment of councils from the

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[2] This study is part of the collaborative research project on Accountability and Power in Environmental Decentralisations: Linking Local Democracy with Environmental Outcomes in Sub Saharan Africa. It

district to the lower local governments. This was to increase powers in matters of local governments and to define their position in relation to the administration of the protectorate. The district council had powers to make bylaws but these had to be approved by the provincial commissioner. Each district had an African local government consisting of chiefs, District Council and other councils as state agents. These had differentiated roles, powers and management responsibilities. For example, chiefs were appointed by the governor and were responsible for administering laws of the protectorate and those made by the district councils.[3] Chiefs had powers to prevent crimes and to arrest the offenders, issue orders for Africans living in the local limits, restrict cultivation of poisonous and non-poisonous plants, preventing water pollution, regulate the cutting of timber and wasteful destruction of trees.[4]

The governors had powers to establish district councils and would determine the structure, appointment mode, duties and frequency of meetings. Within this decentralised structure, governors possessed excessive powers over the administration of districts. Each district was headed by a District Commissioner who had powers to appoint financial and advisory committees. Excessive powers applied to the forestry sector as well. The governor had powers to declare any area a forest reserve or un-demarcated forest by notice published in the gazette. The conservator/forest officer could issue license for cutting trees, working or removal of forest produce[5]. In 1929, the first Forestry Policy was drawn and its objectives were to protect the major catchment areas and to secure areas of timber production. This was revised in 1948 to suit the demands of the growing population and, therefore, focused on timber production by converting natural forests into plantations.

Besides the mainstream government with the overall control of the central forests, the kingdom governments had powers over forests belonging to the kingdoms. In Buganda region, the Kabaka's government had its forest policy and a separate

is being undrtaken in Mali, Cameroon, Uganda, Mozambique, Zimbabwe and South Africa.
[3]Uganda Protectorate, African Authority Ordinance 1919: The Official Gazette of the Uganda protectorate Vol. XII No.12 June 30th 1919
[4] Uganda Protectorate, African Authority Ordinance 1919: The Official Gazette of the Uganda protectorate Vol. XII No.12 June 30th 1919, Cap. 72 Section 7
[5] Uganda Protectorate, The Forest Ordinance 1913: The Official gazette of the Uganda Protectorate Vol. VI No.1 January 15th 1913

implementation structure although they had similar implementation programmes[6]. The overall effect was the creation of centralised structures within the decentralised ones, which existed up to independence in 1962.There was a structure of central government with its seat in Kampala and a strong network of provincial and kingdom governments in areas like Buganda, Ankole, Toro, Bunyoro and Busoga.

In the wildlife sector, the 1936 Game Ordinance was enacted which specified rights, powers and means of arbitration for the wildlife. This ordinance was not any different from those of the forest sector in terms of power distribution. The governor was given excessive power over the sector for, example, declaration of any area a Game Reserve or a Sanctuary, appointment of honorary game rangers and granting permits to photograph of animals. Issuing of licence was placed under the Administrative Officer or any other person authorised by the governor. In 1952, the National Parks Ordinance was passed to provide for the establishment of the National Parks. The governor had powers to establish any area a National Park after consultations with African Local Governments. The management was placed under the hands of the board of trustees. This is not any different from the current Wildlife Statute. The trustees were required to keep correct accounts on revenues and expenditures and were subject to annual audit[7].

The legal framework further brought fundamental changes with the introduction of wildlife committees[8]. The overall objectives were to encourage local people to play a part in formulating plans for conservation and economic use of wildlife resources and to enhance attitude change towards wildlife. The role the committees were to advise on biological research and wildlife management policy. Similarly, participation of other actors (chiefs) and newly appointed officials was through lectures and film shows. The ordinance also regulated possession, sale, purchase, import and export of scheduled animals and, or trophies. Much as the ordinance talked about participation

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[6] Uganda Government, Annual *Report of the Uganda Government Annual Forest Report 1962-63, 1962*.

[7] Uganda Protectorate, National Parks Ordinance, No. 3 of 1952, Uganda Government Printers and Publishers Corporation, Entebbe, Uganda

[8] The Game Preservation and Control Ordinance, The Official gazette of the Uganda Protectorate, Uganda Government Printers and Publishers Corporation, Entebbe, Uganda, 1959

of local people on the committees, the members of were more technical than grassroots representatives.

The Republican Constitution of 1967, abolished kingdom governments and centralised natural resource and other governance under the Local Administrations Act of 1967. The abolition of kingdom governments was based on the cost effectiveness argument that the kingdoms required a lot of money, which was not available at the time. In addition, Baganda were regarded tribalistic, inward-looking and inflexible[9] (Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, 1971). This undermined the support for restoration of kingdoms for example Kigezi elders were strongly against monarchism.

In 1971 when Idi Amin took over power, the nature of local government administration was changed into provinces, districts, sub-districts, counties, sub-counties and parishes. By 1973 there were 10 provinces, 38 districts and sub-districts respectively. The overhaul in the structure was aimed at bringing services nearer to the people. During this time, the 1967 constitutional powers were revoked and instead were vested in the president.[10] In February 1971, the Local Administration and Urban authorities were also formally dissolved under the Local Administration and Urban Authorities Decree (Municipal and Town Councils).

The centralised governance structure during this time could have led to several impacts. For example, various decrees, and particularly the Land Reform Decree (1975), further consolidated central government's presence in the local management of natural resources. During this time, extensive destruction of natural resources by powerful state agents and other central government natural resource managers was widespread. Many forests including Mabira Forest, for example, were destroyed on instigation of the government's campaign of double agricultural production. In the Mount Elgon area, from the 1970s to the mid 1980s, there was heavy encroachment due to agricultural activities and approximately 20,900 hectares were completely destroyed and 3,600 hectares had been partially destroyed (Van Heist, 1994, in

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[9] Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, *The First 366 Days,* Government Printer, Entebbe, Uganda, 1971.
[10] See also legal notice of 1971 and Parliamentary Powers Decree no. 8 of 1971

Hoefsloot, 1997). Massive destruction was also attributed to the breakdown of law and order; and for the case of Mount Elgon, there was also forced upslope migration due to the Karimajong raids (Hoefsloot, 1997). The Karimojong are pastoralists and reside in the North-Eastern tip of Uganda bordering Kenya and Sudan. They are well known for raiding cattle from the neighbouring tribes such as Ateso, Langi, Acholi and Kupsabiny and have led to massive poverty among their neighbours.

The two political regimes that succeeded Amin did not bring much change in environmental governance[11]. The focus could have been reconciliation of the different political factions, which were not successful. Not much could have been implemented because of the short-lived nature of the governments. These were followed by the Obote II regime, which lasted, from 1980 to 1984. The regime had commitment to natural resource management. These included, revision of the existing land policy, preserving natural forests, promoting afforestation, rehabilitating and re-equipping the national parks, hotels, lodges and promoting livestock and fisheries production (Tumushabe, 1999). Much as the government would have at least brought some changes in environmental governance, it was derailed by several problems of civil wars, corruption and lack of funds. What would have improved the situation was the adoption of the Structural Adjustment Reforms whose main agenda was to improve the economic growth through trade and market liberalisation and reduction of inflationary pressures. The programme fell in 1984 because of high inflation and persistent civil wars that led to the overthrow of Obote II.

The National Resistance Movement (NRM) government, which came to power in 1986 after five years of bush war, initiated the process of decentralising powers to sub-national governments through the system of resistance councils, now known as Local Councils. According to this government, the new political and administrative structure aimed at restoring people's sovereignty through popular participation,

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[11] The two short-lived leaders that followed Amins regime were by Usuf Lule under the Uganda National Liberation Front that ruled only for sixty-eight days (April to June 1979) and Godfrey Lukongwa Binaisa from June to May 1980.

developing districts capacity to plan, design and manage their own social and economic destiny.[12]

The decentralisation process, which has been under implementation since 1993[13] was implemented in three phases involving thirteen, fourteen and twelve districts in phase one, two and three respectively. However, many more districts have been created and the current number stands at 56 and all are run on a decentralised mode of administration. The stated objectives of the decentralisation process were to reactivate the populace into a more participative and development conscious orientation. Decentralisation, therefore, was not only intended to shift responsibility for development planning and management from the centre to sub-national levels but also to ensure participatory decision-making, transparency, accountability and sustainability in the entire development process. The decentralisation policy was also meant to challenge local authorities and the citizens to become initiators, implementers and overseers of development plans geared towards addressing local problems.

With respect to natural resource management in Uganda, the decentralisation policy called for a radical departure from centrally formulated plans and implementation strategies to district and community-based participatory planning and management approaches. This was designed purposely to leave the centre with a policy formulation and technical supervision role, which would promote a feeling of ownership of environmental programmes on the part of districts and sub-district authorities. Apart from planning, new structures have been established to effect the implementation of the programmes. The Local Governments Act (1997) in line with the National Environment Statute (1995) established the position of Secretary for Environmental Affairs at all levels of local governments. The Secretaries for Environmental Affairs are required by law to mobilise members of the public to initiate and participate in

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[12] National Resistance Movement, Ten Point Programme, NRM Secretariat, Kampala, 1988. The programme was drawn by National Resistance Movement during the bush war to guide the implementation of the activities.
[13] Government of Uganda, *The Local Governments (Resistance Councils) Statute 1993. Statute Supplement No.8 of December 1993*, Uganda Government Printers and Publishers Corporation, Entebbe, Uganda

environmental activities and ensure sustainable use of natural resources by local communities.

The consequence of this devolution of environmental management and use decisions and responsibilities from the central government to local councils is supposed be an increased sense of ownership of local resources by local people. In case of forestry and wildlife, devolution of powers of resource control has stimulated an upward demand for the sharing and transfer of revenue from central government to local government. This demand has positive implications for natural resource management because of the perceived benefits arising from protecting the resources.

The revenue sharing schemes in either case have introduced a number of power centres. There are the Central Government representatives who determine and disburse the fund contributions under the revenue sharing scheme. There are also disbursements made within the Local Council system, in which case negotiations are not uncommon for timely disbursement of resources between the various Local Council levels. The efficiency and effectiveness of the disbursement and accountability systems for the funds under the two revenue sharing schemes are, however, closely related to the strength and structure of accountability of local councils in the local arena. Stronger personalities in the Local Council system have been associated with better disbursement rates to their level and vice versa. Whereas local councilors are elected, which should make them more accountable to their local constituents and better mobilisers for environmental management, other mechanisms for increasing local or downward accountability seem equally at play.

The information in this article is based on fieldwork that was undertaken for a period of eleven months in Mukono (Mabira Forest Reserve) and Mbale districts (Mount Elgon National Park). The main method of data collection was qualitative, through the use of in-depth interviews and focus group guide. These instruments were administered to government representatives, the representatives of Tourism Advisory and Resource user Committees and Non Governmental Organisations. Focus group discussions were held with the communities and meetings of the management committees attended. Secondary data focused on a review of legal, policy documents,

studies on decentralisation, accountability and participation and minutes and monthly reports of the management committees.

These districts were selected for the study because they have undertaken a number of bold steps in decentralised governance of natural resources. Mukono district, for instance, has been cited as a success story in the implementation of the government's policy of decentralisation. The district also comprises a large section of the important Mabira Forest ecosystem, which has a large eco-tourism potential. In addition, the Forestry Department is implementing a collaborative forest management programme. The new approach presupposes that effective management of the forest reserve will depend on the degree of involvement and commitment by the communities.

Mbale district, on the other hand, has moved a long way in implementing the decentralisation policy. The district developed its own District Environment Action Plan (DEAP) and an environment policy as important guiding documents for the decentralised governance of natural resources. The District Environment Action Plan complements a collaborative natural resource management arrangement between local communities and park authorities. Local communities under this arrangement are encouraged to participate in the management of park resources through Park Management and Advisory Committees (PMAC) and receive 20% of park revenue, remitted through the Local Councils. However, this institution was dissolved because of the problems in its strategy. It was not participatory in that members were not elected by the local community and it purely represented park interests when one looks at the accountability mechanisms and membership.

The article is organised into seven sections. Section one gives the introduction, which gives the focus of the article, methodology and the general arrangement. The general governance structure of Uganda since colonial times and links with the natural resource management is given. The second section highlights historical, ethnographic, policy and theoretical literature. Both developing and developed country literature has been reviewed. The third section gives a legal framework for decentralisation and collaboration/co-management models in the forestry and wildlife sectors. Section four gives details of the study sites, including the actors involved, the nature of powers devolved and accountability relations. The fifth section deals with ecological and

social outcomes and identifies those directly linked to the institutional changes. Section six explains the emerging issues, and section seven gives the conclusions of the study.

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Understanding Decentralisation

A growing number of Third World Countries have decentralised their governments in the 1980s. These shifts in the governance structures have necessitated devolution of what had been centrally controlled. These new changes have raised concern among scholars and academicians. Consequently, a number of case studies and detailed reviews have been undertaken on the subject of decentralisation (Paul, 1992; Mawhood, 1993; Agrawal and Ribot, 1999; Ribot, 1999; Agrawal, 1999; Blair, 2000; Lind and Cappon, 2001; Messer, (Undated) and Ribot, 2001). The authors have tackled different aspects of decentralisation mainly: historical accounts, fiscal decentralisation, accountability and participation. The studies reveal consistency in the aims of the decentralisation policy which aims at transferring power from the central state to the lower local governments. Decentralisation policy has been adopted because it brings equity, efficiency and service provision (Ribot, 2000, Mawhood, 1993).

Decentralisation has been defined as the devolution of central state assets and powers to local or private decision- making bodies including representatives of local government, local administrative branches of central government, non-state organisations (NGOs, co-operatives, associations, or private individuals and corporations). When powers are delegated to local branches of the central state processes, it is called deconcentration or bringing government and its services closer to the people. Devolution of power to non-state entities is called privatisation, while devolution to community and representatives of local governments is called decentralisation. Ribot (1999) regards it as a mechanism for community participation. Agrawal (1999) does not hold a different view but regards the above components as variants of decentralisation.

Studies on decentralisation in Uganda have concentrated on decentralised governance, political participation and civil society (Makerere Institute of Social Research, 1997; Tukahebwa, 1998; Makara, 1998; Nsibambi, 1998; Kisubi, 1996; and Wanyina,

1996). These studies have explained the impact of decentralisation on the above elements. However, not much attention has been put on the decentralisation of natural resource management.

Although the various laws on decentralisation and natural resource management require that local governments establish development committees, Makara (1998) found that no such committees existed in the districts of Ntungamo, Mbarara and Tororo. This could imply ineffectiveness in terms of accountability and participation in decentralised natural resource management. Tukahebwa (1998) found that decision-making for service delivery within government structures remains largely in the realm of the leaders. This inability to transfer decision-making is likely to influence the allocation of resources to the environmental sector.

Studies elsewhere also reveal varied results. Madondo (2000) pointed out that decentralisation has resulted in recentralisation through the trickle-down approach. Ribot (2001) added that many forests previously in the public domain have been privatised in the name of decentralisation. In Uganda, the major question of these changes in management have not been clearly understood.

In terms of fiscal decentralisation, Ribot (2001) points out that fiscal transfers are a difficult matter. Recent interaction with districts through the Districts Needs Assessment Survey in Kampala and Bushenyi districts revealed complaints with regard to fiscal decentralisation. The district officials indicated that they did not have power to allocate funds to their priorities under the conditional grant system. Kalangala district was the most frequently quoted case that was given the conditional grants for road repair and yet their priority was water transport as it is an island.

Similarly, Nsibambi (1998) argues that the basis under which unconditional grants were worked out did not favour local authorities. The impact of the delays and conditionalities of central government have led to the inability of the ministries to implement the decentralisation policy at the same pace, leading to some sectors improving faster than others. This has also restricted the scope of local decision-making (Onyach-Olaa and Doug Porter, undated)

Although local governments prepare and pass their own budgets without reference to the central government, Onyach-Olaa and Doug Porter (undated) indicates that the portion of the budget allocated to priorities was declining. This has been due to inability to reform the local tax system.

2.2 Accountability and Decentralisation

Accountability is an important aspect in decentralised local governance (Blair, 2000; Agrawal and Ribot, 2000). It is seen as a measure of responsibility (Agrawal and Ribot, 2000). It is a means through which individuals and organisations are held responsible for performance (Paul, 1992). Successful implementation of decentralisation cannot occur without effective accountability (Blair, 2000; Ribot, 2000; Agrawal and Ribot, 2000). Onyach-Olaa and Doug Porter (undated) indicates that decentralisation depends on clear definition of roles and responsibilities which determines the level of performance.

There are different mechanisms through which this can be achieved. Blair (2000) identifies them as elections, opinion surveys, political parties, formal procedures, public meetings, civil society and free and active media. Ribot (2001) enumerates seventeen mechanisms through which downward accountability can be enhanced (pages 31-36). What is intriguing is that these mechanisms are there in theory, which makes most decentralised structures fail to attain objectives of downward accountability. Blair (2000) further adds that free, fair, regularly scheduled elections and universal suffrage are the most direct mechanisms for ensuring that those who govern are accountable to the citizens.

The most common methods that have been used in Uganda are elections and appointments. These are the most popular forms of choosing representatives. Although these are seen as measures of accountability, there not so ultimate to ensure accountability (Agrawal and Ribot, 2000). Elected leaders in most cases are not accountable to their constituencies. In Uganda, several measures have been adopted to counteract the unaccountable leaders for example competition for the posts of leadership in the same constituency, instituting local commissions and interdiction of some members. However, in the case of appointments, favouritism is likely to

influence the process and this will have negative implications for accountability. The general feeling likely to arise out of such a method is that after all, they never ele cted them.

Lack of accountability has serious implications for natural resource management. It determines the ability of policy-makers and implementers to listen to the local people's voices and needs. Lane (1993) revealed insensitivity and inflexibility of government directives on indigenous natural resource management practices, which led to a conflict between customary and modern institutional arrangements. Similar cases of central government impositions were also documented in Meru forest where community access to resources in the commons was curtailed by establishment of the schools. This was contrary to the 1972 Village Act and the 1982 Local Government Act, which conferred power to the village councils to administer forest areas and other natural resources. The above examples point to the conflicts and the design of inappropriate policies.

Whereas accountability mechanisms for effective implementation of decentralisation are in place, accountability is still a problem. Consequently, this leads to a set of negative effects for policy and the actual implementation of decetralised activities. For example, unaccountable bodies are in most cases corrupt and this has negative implications for resource allocation for projects. In Uganda, corruption-related malpractices in some of the decentralised districts have been widely reported.[14] In terms of natural resource implications, lack of accountability could result in favouritism in the allocation of timber concessions and inappropriate allocation of revenue generated from the resources.

It has also been noted that decentralisation has accountability relations. Makara (1998) found that in Ntungamo, Mbarara, and Tororo districts, decentralisation has

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[14] A number of commissions have been established. Examples are Amos Twinomujuni commission to investigate corruption in the allocation of plots in Mbarara District, and Justice Musoke Kibuuka commission revealed that about 400 million shillings was lost in printing false graduated tax tickets. The commission also found out that members of the council had been awarding themselves tenders and prices quoted were exorbitant (Nsimbambi, 1998). This indication of corrupt tendencies could risk management of natural resources at that level. Justice Julia Ssbutinde Commission to investigate corruption-related malpractice's in the Police in 2000 and the army in 2001, which revealed several malpractices among them related to natural resource exploitation.

increased citizens' capacity to check abuses of power. The competition for political offices within districts has opened opportunities for responsible, transparent, accountable and innovative leaders (Kisubi, 1996). The level of competition seems an underlying element for ensuring accountability within the political realm.

2.3 Community Participation and Decentralisation

The concept of community is not new in development discourse. It is as old as the colonial period (Cown and Shenton, 1996). Successful interventions of the colonial state could not occur without involvement of communities. Cowen and Shenton (1996) state, *"the community became the means to direct, stimulate development and efficient marketing of colonial products."* Similarly, Ribot (1999) noted that the aim of indirect rule was the development of an African society to participate in the life of a modern world as a community in its own right.

Community participation is an important aspect in implementation of decentralization (Agrawal, 1999; Blair, 2000; Ribot, 1999; Agrawal and Ribot, 2000). With decentralisation there is hope that as government comes closer to people, all categories of people will participate in politics and there is empowerment, benefits for all and poverty reduction (Blair 2000). However, participation is also dependent on the other variables such as accountability and the level of decision-making. Ribot (1999) indicates that participation without locally accountable representation is simply not community participation.

Community participation is defined as the collective control of public resources and decisions (Ribot 1999). It has been noted as a key to success in most development projects. The concept was introduced after realising that sustainable development in social-ecological systems could not yield the required results and did not involve actual targets in planning, implementation and evaluation unless such communities fully participated (Ostrom, 1990; Oyhus, 1998). Additionally, Ostrom (1990) sees the community as an ideal unit for decentralisation since its members share common interests, norms and beliefs. A contrary view is that communities are not homogeneous entities. This would then call for different strategies in involving communities. Community participation has been emphasised in the current policies

and legal documents. The National Environmental Policy for Uganda (1994) recognises participation of the people in resource management and environmental protection. The aim is to involve resource users in planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation at all levels, empower them to manage their own resources and bring management decisions and accountability closer.

Many planners have, however, treated communities as homogeneous entities. Yet they are different in terms of access to land, its size and quality of land holdings, gender, seniority and ownership of assets (Ribot, 1999). They, therefore, would participate at different levels in different forms. Appreciation of this heterogeneity is important for effective participation of the public in most developmental projects. In addition, Ribot, (2001) added that environmental ministries have tended to avoid these integrative local planning processes and that management plans are not only required for commercial exploitation but also for other environment activities. In Uganda, the approach towards environmental planning has changed under the whole coordination framework by the National Environmental Management Authority and the subsequent legislation that emphasises participatory approaches to planning.

Participatory approaches to development and the environment have received great attention in recent decades. They emerged from a long history of frustration with failed top-down approaches. Participatory development has become a means to incorporate local populations and civil society into decisions formerly reserved for state agencies (Ribot, 1999). As new forms of participation are being developed, the problem of who represents the local populations emerges. These new forms of participation include mobilisation through participatory rural appraisals, participatory mapping and creating ad hoc committees appealing to chiefs. Ribot (1999), for example, revealed that chiefs are used in participatory projects as state administrators. However, the weakness with this is that chiefs may not represent or be accountable to the local populations. This is due to the inherent structures of appointment that make chiefs upwardly accountable to the state rather than downwardly accountable to the people they represent.

Ole Therkilsden (1993) pointed out that governance involving local levels seems sustainable. This is because these levels possess features of democratic government,

which are characterised by representation of local social groups as in the case of Uganda and Ghana. For example, local councils have some autonomy to make decisions over taxation, issue bylaws and employ staff subject to supervision/ control by central government.

The literature reviewed indicates that the intended of objectives of increased partic ipation and improved accountability does not always yield the desired outcomes. The decision-making levels that would enhance community participation are always limited and the establishment of new institutions does not guarantee effective accountability and participation.

3.0 THE LEGAL AND POLICY FRAMEWORK: DECENTRALISATION AND COLLABORATION MANAGEMENT

The legal framework is an important guiding principle to decentralisation and natural resource management policies. It formalises power and authority among different actors, shows power boundaries, nature of powers devolved and defines accountability relations. Likewise, the collaborative arrangements define the relationship between the stakeholders involved, their responsibilities, rights and agreements on sharing benefits (Hoefsloot, 1997).

The Local Government Act 1997[15] operationalises the decentralisation policy[16] as stated in its objectives which include: "To give full effect of decentralisation of functions, powers, responsibilities and services to all levels, ensure democratic participation in and control of decision-making by people concerned, establish a democratic, political and gender-sensitive administrative set up in Local Governments, establish sources of revenue and financial accountability and provide for election of Local Council Leaders."

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[15] "An Act to amend, consolidate and streamline the existing law on Local Governments in line with the Constitution of 1995, to give full effect of decentralisation and devolution of functions, powers, services and to provide for decentralisation at all levels of Local governments to ensure good governance and democratic participation in and control of decision making by people."
[16] The decentralisation policy is enshrined in the 1995 Constitution Chapter Eleven.

The Act specifies the relations between the Central government[17] and the districts and specifies the roles of each. The local governments under decentralisation are given authority to exercise all political and executive powers and functions, provide services, protect the Constitution and other laws of Uganda and ensure the implementation and compliance with government policy.

It establishes the local government councils, which are the highest political authority and gives them legislative and executive powers. The district council[18] is the planning authority of the district and this is done through preparing integrated and development plans. These plans have to be in line with the national priorities as outlined in the Poverty Eradication Action Plan. This in itself is limiting to the districts because the priority planning should be based on the priority needs. In most cases the matching of district needs with national priorities might be coincidental rather than planned, making decentralisation centrally positioned in enhancing state goals.

In terms of legislative powers, The Local Government Act, 1997 clearly separates what the districts should do and should not. Districts are given power to make laws, which have to be consistent with the Constitution and other laws made by the legislature to be exercised by district councils passing bills into ordinances. On the other hand, a local council does not have power to make any laws relating to the establishment or administration of courts or to exercise judicial powers.[19]

The generation and sharing of the revenue in the rural areas, is the responsibility of the Sub-county councils. Sixty-five percent or any higher figure as the district may approve of the revenue collected is retained at the Sub-county, while the remaining percentage is passed over the to the district. In the case of failure, the district council has powers to make full recovery of the revenue. It is also stated that where the

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[17] The central government remained with the autonomy to take care of policy, security, national planning, defence, immigration, foreign affairs, national projects, secondary and tertiary education and hospitals. In addition, the central government also maintained a monitoring role through line ministries and provides key services in form of consultancy. The Central government uses such instruments as policy formulation, campaigns, legislation and setting of standards and negotiations to realise their obligation (Government of Uganda, Local Government Act 1997, Second schedule) 1997.

[18] The District Council is composed of a chairperson, one councillor directly elected to represent electoral area in the district, two youth councillors, two councillors with disabilities and each of the councillors one is a woman and councils forming one third of the council.
[19] Government of Uganda (1997): Local government Act, 1997, Section 45.

district fails to remit 65% to the Sub County, the Sub County shall retain it.[20] In the forestry sector, Statutory Instrument Supplement No. 8 of 1995 and Statute 15 of 1993 to effect 40 per cent of net revenue were passed. These specified what is to be shared out between local councils for example, the Local Council III office, pass over 50 per cent to the Local Council V, 10 per cent to Local Council IV; and 25 per cent to Local Council I.

Accountability mechanisms are also clearly spelt out in the Local Government Act. Section 87 requires every local government council and administrative unit to keep proper books of account and other records, to be audited by the Auditor General. In addition, gross mismanagement of funds and other irregularities of the council may be checked through Parliament, which can recommend suspension of funds to such a district. The Chief Administrative Officer (CAO) or Town Clerk are the channels of communication between line ministries and local government.

The National Environment Statute (1995) is an important instrument, which establishes structures from the district to the lower level governments and institutions responsible for the formulation, coordination and implementation of environmental policies.   The National Environmental Management Authority (NEMA) was established by the statute and is supervised by the minister. It is in charge of all environmental activities in the country. It coordinates the implementation of government policy, ensures integration of environmental concerns in national planning, proposes environmental policies, monitors and supervises environment activities and liaises with the private sector and other agencies on issues related to environment. In its institutional structure, The National Environment Management Authority (NEMA) is guided by the Policy Committee, which draws policy guidelines and identifies obstacles to implementation.

The management of the environment under the Environmental Statute is decentralised through the established structures of District Environmental Committee (DEC), and Lower Environmental Committees (LECs). The District Environment Officer is appointed with the advice of the District Service Committee. The role of this Officer

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[20]Government of Uganda (1997): Local government Act, 1997, .Section 86 (2)

is to advise the District Environmental Committee on environment matters, liaise with the National Environmental Management Authority, make reports, promote awareness and serve as a Secretary to the Lower Environmental Committees. The District Environment Committee is supposed to coordinate activities of the District Council relating to the management of the environment and natural resources. They are also supposed to ensure that environmental concerns are integrated in the district plans and projects approved by the District Resistance Council. In addition, they are supposed to assist in the development and formulation of environmental bylaws,[21] coordinate the activities of the Local Environmental Committees (LECs), receive reports from Local Environmental Committees and prepare the District State of Environment Reports. These follow the guidelines prescribed by the Resistance Council Statute 1993.

Down in the structure is the Local Environmental Committees appointed by the local governments with advice from District Environmental Committee. These are supposed to prepare Local Environmental Action Plans consistent with those at national and district level. They are also charged with public environmental education campaigns and mobilisation of people to conserve the environment.

Decentalisation in the forest sector has taken a different turn with the forest reserves remaining central assets managed in trust for the people and Local Forest Reserves placed under the management of Local Councils. The Forest Reserves (Declaration Order, 1998) further specifies areas of authority and forests to be declared as central forests and local forest reserves. The Minister for Water, Lands and Environment is the overall decision-maker and has the power to declare any area a forest reserve and indicates that forests should be held in trust by the respective District or Lower Local Government Council.

In the wildlife sector, the Uganda Wildlife Policy was instituted in 1996, and its aim is *"to conserve in perpetuity the rich biological diversity and natural habitats of Uganda in a manner that accommodates the development needs of the nation and well-being of its people and global community."* In addition, the policy recognises the need to involve other actors' mainly local communities, landowners, the private sector

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[21] These are rules made by lower local councils under section 40 of the Resistance Council Statute 1993.

and NGOs in conservation and management. In order to ensure that the different actors are involved, different strategies are embraced, including collaborative management, wildlife use rights and other participatory initiatives. The policy marked a fundamental shift from the state protected and controlled wildlife and the wildlife areas. Emphasis is on community and private participation and economic gain from the wildlife. The policy resulted in the establishment of the Uganda Wildlife Authority and Community Wildlife Protected Area Institutions in which communities are empowered to benefit from accessing some degree of management and use rights over wildlife in protected areas.

Community participation is provided for in the policy and the different mechanisms through which the Uganda Wildlife Authority can achieve this are identified. This could be through entering a suitable collaborative or commercial arrangement with any person to manage the protected area in question, provide services and manage the species or a class of species of animals and plants. In this kind of arrangement, the Uganda Wildlife Authority may grant wildlife use rights and through its board of trustees is expected to pay 20 per cent[22] of the park entry fees to the local government of the area surrounding the protected area. The policy further specifies that the minister in charge of wildlife must consult local communities before declaring any new area a wildlife conservation area. It also specifies that out of the fifteen members on the board of trustees, five should be representatives from the local communities.

Section 70 (4) of the Uganda Wildlife Statute 1996 provides for revenue sharing, the source and the mode of disbursement. The policy on revenue sharing aims at addressing the unfair distribution of benefits from protected areas to the local people and to enlist support for long-term survival and to act as catalysts to strategic partnerships. Section 84 (1b) and subsection 3 of the Local Government Act 1997 provides for a mid-term grant to be provided to the local governments to finance programs agreed upon between the central and local governments. The mode of disbursement should be direct to the Sub-county through a grant facility screened by the Community Protected Area Institutions and endorsed by the District Council to the Uganda Wildlife Authority.

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[22] See also the Uganda Wildlife Authority, Revenue Sharing Programme Around Protected Areas, Community Conservation Unit., 2000

The above legal structure in the implementation of the wildlife protected area activities raises a number of issues on accountability and decision-making. For instance, members of the board of trustees are only answerable to the minister who appoints them. This in itself is limiting because it does not leave room for other stakeholders involved to check on the activities. Community access to revenue is indirect through preparing proposals, which requires a lot of support to communities due to lack of skills.

Collaborative management is part of the community conservation approach, which involves interaction with communities living in and around the protected areas and forest reserves. It involves sharing of benefits, rights and responsibilities with the local communities.[23] The forest ranger is in charge of collecting fees on behalf of the Forest Department. An equal share of 50 per cent is supposed to be remitted for community development and the other share submitted directly to the Treasury Department. Collaborative management is based on: ineffectiveness of central governments, lack of resources and rising populations, international pressure for Structural Adjustment and democratisation, the emergence of the concept of protected area, the realisation to avail communities with forest products and that forests cannot be retained for biodiversity conservation alone (Craig, 2000). The Uganda Wildlife Authority recognises that collaborative management alone cannot lead to effective control of protected areas. It has to be supplemented by law enforcement, education, and awareness creation. The possible reasons given include: to overcome conflicts with neighbouring communities, reduce costs and efficiency by taking advantage of opportunities for local people to contribute towards protection and rehabilitation, a philosophical commitment to human rights by recognising that resources from protected areas make a substantial contribution to local livelihoods and poverty alleviation, and, make a contribution towards maintaining traditional knowledge.

Under the co-management programme[24] the local people are supposed to participate in park/forest planning processes, have direct access to protected area wildlife for subsistence purposes, receive direct benefit from tourism and indirect benefits through

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[23] According to the Draft 2001 Forest Policy, it is clearly stated that this collaboration does not surrender the ultimate responsibility for the forest reserve to partner stakeholders.

[24] as cited in Craig (2000): Community Conservation in the Mt Elgon Area: A Study of the interactions

funds or services to compensate them for benefits forgone or for costs incurred. In addition, they are supposed to elect a committee to represent and manage on their behalf and in consultation with Park/forest management, formulate and implement mechanisms for use and control of resources such as designating resource use areas/trails.

Collaborative management in the forestry and wildlife sectors has legislative mandate. This is in built in the legal and policy documents. The Forest Department emphasises the development of eco-tourism as a form of collaborative management. This is consistent with the Forest Policy 1998[25], which emphasise sustainable resource use in gazetted forest reserves through involving local communities in planning and management of recreational development, generating benefits to the Forest Department and creating public awareness. Power and revenue sharing are important aspects of the policy. For example, it provides for the establishment of Forest Management Advisory Committees as avenues for increasing community participation in forest management decisions. The Forest Department in 1996 started a dialogue with the district councils to share responsibility for the management of local forest reserves. This ideally reversed the 1966 decision where all forest reserves were left under the central government full control.[26]

In the wildlife sector, collaborative management is clearly spelt out in the Wildlife Statute 1996. The statute gives power to the executive director to enter into an agreement with any person for managing a protected area so long as a management plan has been submitted. The agreements have to conform to the guidelines approved by the board of trustees. Further, the statute clearly identifies the role of the staff and communities. The differentiation of roles is critical in minimising power conflicts and enhancing accountability.

between management Authorities and the Local Communities, MA Thesis, University of Manchester.

[25] Government of Uganda: The Forestry Act, Ministry of Water, Lands and Environment. Draft for Consultation, 2001.

[26] However, from the policy and legislative perspective, the Forest Reserves and National Parks have not been decentralised. The central government still controls these resources but operates a co-management programme, which is perceived to bring effective management of the natural resources. The reasons for failure to decentralise these assets are based on the unequal distribution of such resources. Government's attempts between 1994 to 1995 to decentralise these resources were futile but many people still think that they are decentralised (interview with the officer in charge of Collaborative Forest Management at the Forest Department headquarters).

In the area of conflict and conflict resolution, the statute specifies for the damage caused by the wild animals to be reported to the officer in charge. This officer is required to assess the extent of damage and take necessary action. On the other hand, the means of arbitration mentioned include penalties and sanctions, which would involve local councils and park authorities. In case the lower levels fail, the resource user committees would write to the warden in charge of the park

4.0 CASE STUDIES

4.1   Mount Elgon National Park

Mount Elgon National Park is located in Mbale and Kapchorwa districts in Eastern Uganda. It is one of the rural districts in Uganda with 90 per cent of the people living in rural areas. Mount Elgon lies on the border between Uganda and Kenya, 100 km North - East of the Lake Victoria shoreline. In Uganda, the mountain lies in the parts of Kongasis, Tingey (North Bugisu), Manjiya and South Bugisu counties. The National Park covers 1,145 sq.km and its range in altitude is 1,460-4,320 m. above sea level. Mount Elgon is an extinct volcano with one of the largest continental craters covering 8 km across. The soils are young, rich in weatherable minerals and relatively resistant to erosion. The climate is dominated by seasonality of alternative moist south westerly and dry the North-East air streams and has bi-modal type of rainfall, with the wettest season being from April to October, and June having a dry spell.

Mount Elgon was gazetted as a forest reserve in the 1930s with the aim of preventing further encroachment from cultivation by the expanding population. Later in 1993, it was gazetted as a National Park. The Sabiny forest dwellers and the Benets/Ndorobo were living within the forest at the time it was gazetted. Enumerations in 1948, 1957 and 1967 revealed 1,000 households with 4,000 cattle and 3,000 sheep (Synot, 1968 quoted in Hoefsloot, 1997). The hunting and grazing was originally uncontrolled. Restrictions on cultivation, and other environmentally hazardous activities were specified. This involved issuing of 70 licences in 1930 allowing for occupation and cultivation, and in 1954,30 licenced families still existed in one of the areas known as Bulucheke, indicating a decline of 40 households. In 1968 the second working plan was drawn, and by that time there were two timber concessions, one in Namatale and

Nkonkonjeru Peninsula and the other in Kapkwata and Suam in Kapchorwa (Hoefsloot, 1997).

In 1968, when the Forest Department was preparing a 10-year working plan for Mount Elgon, there was fear as regards expansion of the number of households and cultivation by forest dwellers. In the 1960s and early 1970s, it was proposed that the forest dwellers be resettled and, as a result, 6,000 hectares were earmarked in 1983 for their resettlement in a place that came to be known as the Ndorobo/Benet Resettlement area.

In October 1993, the area was gazetted and management was put in the hands of Mount Elgon National Park following government's policy to uplift conservation. From 1993 to 1996, the management was under the Uganda National Parks (UNPS) following the National Parks Act. In 1996, the Uganda Wildlife Statute was enacted which again changed the management to Uganda Wildlife Authority (UWA).

The management objectives of Mt Elgon National Park include: meeting some of the communities' and Uganda National Parks' needs in use and conservation of Mt Elgon National Park; gaining people's acceptance of the National Park and its boundaries and developing good working relationships between the people of Ulukusi and Mt Elgon National Park staff; protecting the National Park area from illegal and destructive use of resources such as pitsawing, charcoal burning, domestic grazing and agriculture encroachment, and ,allowing swift regeneration of the area encroached by agriculture and to protect the forested zone (Zone II) from further destruction.

In addition, it aims at increasing people's knowledge on the need for and value of conserving Mt Elgon ecosystems as a National Park and increase understanding of park staff to the needs of the people, integrating local and indigenous knowledge into the management of Mt Elgon, mobilising the people of Ulukusi parish represented by Kitsatsa Forest (use) Management Committee and in collaboration with Mt Elgon management to take responsibility to monitor and control access to Forest resources inside the Mt Elgon National Park, reducing people's direct dependence on some of

the resources from the National Park, and gaining the people's commitment to growing substitutes on their farms (Memorandum of Understanding, 1996).

In order to realise the stated objectives, negotiations between the institution with jurisdiction over the protected area with other relevant stakeholders had to be made. Formal and binding arrangements were put in place through the signing of agreements between Mt Elgon National Park and the representatives of the communities.

Mount Elgon Conservation and Development Project (MECDP)

Mount Elgon Conservation and Development Project is an integrated development project which started in 1988 to assist the Forest Department regain control of the forest that had been encroached upon. It is implemented under the Ministry of Tourism, Trade and Industry in collaboration with Uganda Wildlife Authority (formerly Uganda National Parks) and the District Authorities in Mbale and Kapchorwa districts. It also involves the departments of Agriculture, Veterinary Services, Forestry and Education. It is implemented with the technical assistance of the World Conservation Union (IUCN) with financial support from the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (NORAD).

The project goal is to safeguard the Mt. Elgon eco-system in a sustainable way. The project aims at raising awareness and promoting active involvement of local communities in conserving forests within the park and soils in the adjacent areas. It also aims at restoring the degraded forest, reduce dependence of local communities on the forest by providing suitable grounds for alternative income-generating activities. Additionally, it aims at reconciling the conservation objectives with the needs and aspirations of the people living around the park by encouraging increased agricultural production through improved methods of farming.

The project was piloted in the two parishes of Ulukusi in Southern Mbale and Mutushet in Eastern Kapchorwa district. The selection of these parishes was based on the socio -economic differences, the extent of encroachment and existence boundary dispute (Hoefsloot, 1997).

The project is implemented in different phases. The first phase of 1988 to 1990 aimed at establishing baseline data that was important in understanding the social economic background and the status of the natural resources. The second phase (1993 to 1996) that followed was a review process, which the project manager called the transitional period. In this period, a dialogue was started with the communities in which sensitisation activities were undertaken in collaboration with Uganda Wildlife officials. The project is currently in its third phase - 1st July 1996 to 30th June 2000.

In order to reduce dependence on the forest, the project introduced different activities covering soil conservation, fuel-saving stoves, agroforestry and income-generation activities. In the category of soil conservation, napier grass has been introduced, which also has positive implications for crop productivity. Varied income-generating activities have been established, among which there are milk cattle on a zero-grazing basis and bee-keeping.

4.1.1 Actors involved

There are different actors involved in decentralised natural resource management. Some are directly involved while others are indirectly involved; but what is clear is that there are government and private institutions and/or their representatives and communities. This in line with Ribot (1999) who points out that actors in the local arena embody appointed or elected officials, Non-Governmental Organisations, chiefs, powerful individuals, corporate bodies such as communities and committees.

The different actors have varying levels and interests in which they influence the implementation of the projects. They have varying degrees to which they influence the way resources are managed, particularly through giving financial resources, retaining some degree of powers, making decisions and utilising the resources. These theoretical highlights are in conformity with Ribot (1999) who identified that actors are located in different relations of accountability and are positioned at different levels of social action.

Since the establishment of the Mount Elgon Conservation and Development Project, a number of actors have been involved at different levels and represent different interests. These fall in the categories of government, Non Governmental

Organisations/donors and corporate bodies. These are the Uganda Wildlife Authority (UWA), Local Government (Department of Agriculture, Veterinary Service, Forestry and Education) and International Union for the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources (IUCN). Non Governmental Organisations include Face Foundation of the Netherlands and donors include the (Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation, NORAD), Communities and Resource User Committees.

Resource User Committee: Resource user committee[27] (Kitsatsa Forest Management Committee) was established in January 1996 after wide consultations with the communities dating as far back as 1992. These were instituted to effect the implementation of the activities as stipulated in the agreement. The process of consultation aimed at soliciting people's views and to create a friendly environment after the tension of the forced evictions of 1993 by Uganda National Parks (now Uganda Wildlife Authority).

The objectives of the Resource User Committee were to: promote better management of the forest resources, set guidelines on resource access and utilisation by communities and mediate between Mount Elgon Conservation and Development Project and other stakeholders in the community.

After the process of relationship building, a two-year agreement was made between Mt Elgon National Park and the people of Ulukusi as represented by Resource User Committee (Kitsatsa Forest Management Committee). Although the process was more consultative, it was not necessarily democratic when it came to the drafting of the agreement. Communities indicated that they had not reached consensus on certain issues as regards resource access. This is contrary to the integrated collaborative management approach in which both parties agree on what is to be shared.

The committee in Ulukusi was composed of 36 members (25 males and 11 females) categorised as resource collectors, elders and Local Council officials. According to the agreement, four members were drawn from the nine villages together with two representatives of the herbalists as a specialist group and two representatives of the

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[27] At the time of the study, The Resource User Committee in Ulukusi had been dissolved because of the expiry of the agreement. However, the agreement was in the process of being renewed.

pitsawers. The co-opted members were the Local Council II Chairman and Secretary for Women, Parish Chief, Ranger in charge of National Park boundary and the Parish Extension Worker (Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Industry and Fisheries). Apart from the main structure, the committee was subdivided into five sub-committees with five members each based on the five trails leading to the National Park. These were charged with the day- to-day monitoring of the forest use along the trails.

The gender differences in the composition of the committee have implications for the natural resource management in that men and women possess different knowledge in terms of natural resource utilisation. This is contrary to the notion that decentralisation would lead to participation of different categories of people including marginalised groups such as women (Bair, 2000). Although the number of women on the committee was relatively high, one cannot conclude that the formation of the committee has been a better avenue for participation in decentralisation. There are important issues such as land and gender roles, which influenced the composition and representation of the committees. It was pointed out that so many women declined to take up leadership on the committees because they feared that their domestic activities would be affected. In addition, the establishment of the Resource User Committee was seen as a golden chance for the communities to negotiate for their lost land due to forced evictions. Due to this fact, men were preferred to represent the communities because land issues are a male domain. If it were not for the project's emphasis of women's involvement, the number of women would have been even lower. There were divergent interests between men and women. While women's emphasis was to regain access to firewood, green vegetables and herbs, men's emphasis was on regaining the lost land. The above indicate that community needs, to a large extent, determine community participation.

The majority of members on the Resource User Committees were Local Council officials. However, this domination on the committees does not guarantee enhancement of community interests since they are state agents. Their role is, therefore, two-edged. There is a possibility of embracing state ideology rather than representing community interests effectively. However, there was no bias in selection

as revealed by the interviews[28]. All respondents emphasised that the committees were democratically elected by the village residents. The process of election was that an individual's name would be nominated, seconded, discussed and then voted by show of hands. There were also other requirements for one to qualify to be elected, and these included being: a permanent resident of Ulukusi parish, trustworthy and incorruptible person, someone familiar with the geography of the area, an adult below 50 years of age and one with demonstrated ability to lead and mobilise.

The above criteria presuppose that communities only select representatives whom they think can articulate their interests. In consultation with the park authorities, the Resource User Committee is supposed to formulate and implement mechanisms for use and control of resources, designate resource use areas/trails and to regulate conduct in the park. This means that the Resource User Committee was granted a certain degree of powers, for example, guarding the agreed entrances during the time of collection of the resources. This is to make sure that only those resources that are agreed upon are collected (bamboo, firewood, herbs and going to the worship place).

Uganda Wildlife Authority (UWA): This was established by an Act of Parliament and is recognized by the Uganda Wildlife Statute 1996 and is governed by a board of trustees. The institutional establishment involved the merger of the Uganda National Parks and the Game Department. In some cases it involved taking over resources which were formerly under the management of the Forest Department. This automatically created conflicts between the two institutions. The statute created institutions as coordination centres and to effect the implementation of the activities, and has established links with other organisations.

The authority has six management programmes, namely, resource management and protection, community conservation and development, tourism, support systems, research and monitoring and plantation management.[29] Some of the detailed activities under these programme areas include community sensitisation, revenue generation and sharing and collection of data to guide management decisions and to evaluate

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[28] One Forest department staff also indicated that the Forest Department does not encourage the appointment or election of local council officials because they derail the process. People elect them but they take advantage of this trust to further personal interest.

park operations. In order to achieve the above, the Uganda Wildlife Authority cooperates with communities adjacent to the National Parks. The links with the project are through the park rangers and community conservation rangers.

The Uganda Wildlife Authority established guidelines for the collaborative management and recognises two main approaches for the management of its protected areas. These are the specific-issue agreements, which focus on understanding between communities on a specific problem, which is also of interest to the research users. The second category involves signing integrated collaborative management agreements whereby the protected area authority negotiates with communities on how to share the benefits, decision-making authority and responsibility[30].

The Uganda Wildlife Authority has collaborated with the Uganda Wildlife Authority - Forests Absorb Carbondoixide Emissions (UWA-FACE) to effect the implementation of some activities (restoring and conserving the forest reserve). This was initiated by the Uganda Wildlife Authority in August 1994 and is one of the management programmes that aims at restoring and conserving the forest reserve and particularly improving the green coverage of the area that had been encroached upon by the communities. In addition, it aims at ensuring total conservation of the forest reserve without any community interference. This project was initiated in Ulukusi pilot parish in 1998, shortly after the expiry of the Resource User Committee agreement. Specific activities under this arrangement are tree-planting in the forest land, guarding the forest against any intrusion, planting the forest boundary and sanctioning offenders.

The recruitment process involved advertisement of the jobs by Uganda Wildlife Authority upon which prospective candidates sent applications, which were scrutinised and shortlisted. Interviews were then carried out and successful applicants appointed. The major requirements were senior four certificate and fluency in the local language (Lugisu).

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[29] Uganda Wildlife Authority: Management Plan for Mount Elgon, 2000.
[30] Uganda Wildlife Authority: Collaborative Management Guidelines, 2000 (draft 1) and Uganda Wildlife Authority: Collaborative Management Strategy 2000.

It was discovered that the establishment of Uganda Wildlife Authority-FACE foundation in the community did not involve of the community members. The UWA-FACE operations were determined from above. Asked why this was the case, one UWA-FACE official had this to say:

> *"These people are very hard to deal with once one applies a lot of diplomacy. Many are not yet convinced about the importance of environmental conservation. Some still believe they have natural rights over the forest. They say the Bazungu came to brainwash Africans and take away what belonged to Africans…Many people have been pretending to be going to collect dry firewood, a little bamboo or greens and end up cutting down trees for timber…Besides, as they walk into the forest, people tend to destroy the young growing plants that would help grow into a forest."*

Such an explanation points to limited community participation and accountability. It clearly shows the levels of power between the communities and the project officials in which case communities are powerless and the other officials are powerful. One Forest Department official indicated that achieving the balance is very difficult. Once given power the poor people are likely to destroy animals, and forests if given absolute power. On the other hand, community members do not have avenues of making the officials accountable because they did not elect them.

This argument was later confirmed by a 75-year-old male from Lukuru who said:

> *"We grew up and found our parents and grand parents depending on the forest. The forest is our father, our mother…How can some stranger come and pose as one who knows more about what has for long been our own…Any one who destroys a parent is a mad person."*

From this quotation, the role of indigenous knowledge in sustainable resource utilisation cannot be disputed. How were resources managed without the intervention of the conservationists.
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Forest and Veterinary Department: The involvement of these departments is through secondment of staff to the project as extension workers although these are directly answerable to the respective ministry.

Donors: The major donor was Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation. These provide funds and indirectly signed a bilateral agreement with the ministry.

Apart from financial support, they are responsible for carrying out reviews (mid-term and end -of- term) and scrutinising the workplans. They are unique actors because the survival of the project almost depends entirely on them. Their recommendations determine whether the next phases of the project would be implemented.

4.1.2 Nature of powers devolved

The nature and source of powers devolved vary for the different actors. For some actors the basis of power is statutory, while others, particularly Community Based Organisations, derive their mandate from their own constitutions and the existing favourable political climate. For such categories whose power sources are not statutory, it is not clear what has been devolved. Their mechanisms of enforcing effective accountability and participation is much dependent on the goodwill of the communities.

The operational framework/authority for Mount Elgon Conservation and Development project lies in the central state as represented by the Ministry of Tourism, Trade and Industry in collaboration with other state structures both at the national and district levels. Since the project operates collaborative management, it is at the peak of decision-making. By nature of this status, the project provides direction on how implementation can be done. In line with the argument of decentralisation, the project did so by establishing the resource user committee, which received some degree of decision-making authority as regards access to the resources and overseeing illegal activities. This is not unique to Uganda. Agrawal and Ribot (2000) noted similar findings of lack of decision and rule-making powers among resource user groups in the Parks and Peoples Programme in Nepal.

The collaborative arrangement emphasises signing of agreements between communities and the project. The agreement gives the committees and sub-committees the power to monitor and control the entire forest. The warden-in-chief is the one responsible for ensuring that bamboo shoots are not smoked from the forest.

The powers of arrest are also clearly specified. The communities have no powers to arrest and fine people. They are supposed to warn the violators of the agreement for

three times and if there is no improvement, they call the Local Council I and II for subsequent action. Major offences such as charcoal burning, splitting trees for firewood, setting snares and hunting are supposed to be forwarded to the Chief Warden and the Police. However, the members indicated that they had never reached that stage.

The power to make rules remains with the districts[31] and these rules are supposed to be followed by implementers of various categories. In terms of control, there are different levels of power. The project and the district control the resources on behalf of the central state, which is done by instituting structures to effect implementation. However, information from the Mbale district officials revealed that the laws that govern the National Park are made centrally. By putting in place the bylaws, they enhance the state control, which have to be adhered to whether the bylaws jeopardise community interests or not. Although in the name of consultation, communities have limited choice over what suits them, they have to adopt what the bylaws require them to. For example, the time for collection of firewood was not suited to most households and the quantities harvested were not enough.

Apart from the limited powers arising out of how the mode of collaboration was introduced, there are other hindrances. In Mbale, the women feel powerless in effecting implementation of activities. Women committee leaders are not respected by men and are threatened by wild animals. One Woman Secretary had this to say:

> "*We women officials fail to control offenders. Some men come with their pangas and axes and just enter the forest to cut the timber even when you are looking. Sometimes we would get scared and just keep quiet. Even the chimpanzees and baboons would run after us yet they fear the men.*"

The Chief Warden is the head of the implementation team of the National Park activities and exercises powers over the management of the National Park. Any activity to be undertaken in the National Park has to be authorised by him/her for example entering the park, camping, taking photographs and movement within the boundaries, among others. The officer is assisted by other staff members such as the law enforcement officers and community conservation rangers. These, among others, educate the people on the policies, conduct field operations/patrols, arrest the culprits

and take them for prosecution, protect the park boundary and give security to the tourists.

4.1.3 Accountability relations

The relations are analysed at three levels, the central level representatives (Uganda Wildlife Authority, Department of Agriculture) with the Resource User Committees, the Non Governmental organistaions with the Resource User Committee and this committee with the communities.

The Resource User Committee was upwardly accountable to the Mount Elgon Conservation and Development Project through the monthly reports and verbal messages. Much as it is important that they should account to the local people whom they represent, they only inform communities on activities to be undertaken as received from the project. This, in most cases, makes communities perform activities to please the project staff at the expense of the people they represent. This is contrary to the downward accountability mechanism, a prerequisite for democratic decentralisation.

Much as the process of instituting the Resource User Committee involved the community in collaboration with Mount Elgon Conservation and Development Project, it was discovered that there was limited accountability. Reporting to the community was only about the deviants to the agreement, visitors to the place, messages from the project and those on sensitisation and training activities. One official argued that much as there was an agreement between the two actors, the guidelines in the agreement were set by Mount Elgon Conservation and Development Project. Unlike UWA-FACE foundation, the committee was reported to have held consultative meetings 1 to 2 times in a month. Emphasis was always more on training and sensitisation and offenders than reports on progress.

UWA-FACE was discovered to be reporting to the Uganda Wildlife Authority district headquarters through the Senior Project Assistant (SPA). This organisation did not report any participation of the communities in conservation activities. One official had

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[31] Government of Uganda (1997): Local Governments Act 1997 Section 39

revealed that they wanted to involve people but the people declined to buy the suggestion. In line with this, one respondent asserted:

> *We never knew how these people came about. How do we get involved in what we do not know? These people operate in a strange way. They value animals more than people. We get to know what they are doing when they are torturing trespassers. For us we see them passing with young trees. They also know themselves as very bad. That is why they always make sure that one works in an area where he does not live."*

Asked to evaluate the effectiveness UWA-FACE in environmental conservation, all the community members argued that it was not effective at all. This had a lot to do with how the project was established in the community. Due to the poor relationships, members mentioned that communities had tried to counteract this by frustrating UWA-FACE efforts. One respondent revealed thus:

> *"Much as they try to show that they are very tough, people still go to the forest and cut down trees at night for timber and firewood. Others malice them by indiscriminately cutting down young trees and just leave them lying…"*

The quotation above may indicate that communities have not internalised the idea of conservation or they are opposed to the forceful methods employed by the staff. The negative reactions are a reflection of poor implementation strategies. Putting strict measures for conservation does not necessarily mean that communities will adhere to them. It all hinges on cultivating good relations and explaining the usefulness of the resources once preserved.

Revenue sharing is also important in ensuring accountability. Although this is part of the Uganda Wildlife Authority policy[32], nothing has been given to communities. This may lead to community distrust of government initiated programmes. If revenue were shared out, it would act as a motivating factor for community participation.

There was also a general problem of listening to people once the crops had been destroyed by animals. One Local Council I Secretary for Defence angrily reported to the UWA-FACE official responsible that his garden of maize had been destroyed by baboons and the answer had been, "*You go and institute a case against the animals in court. I will call them (animals) to come and answer the charges."* The respondent angrily narrated *" How do you convince somebody that baboons have a right over our*

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[32] Uganda Wildlife Authority: Revenue Sharing Programme Around Protected Areas, Community

land more than human beings?" This shows the extent of the insensitivity to people's problems and a manifestation of poor accountability relations. To the communities, there is a perception that more value is attached to the forest and the animals rather than the people, which are disincentives to participation. Even what the law provides is not followed for instance in case of damage, the officers after receiving reports are supposed to assess the extent of damage and take necessary action. However, this has not been done[33].

4.2   Mabira Forest Reserve

The Mabira Forest Reserve (MFR), lies in Central Uganda in Mukono district (see details in appendix II). The district has total population of 824, 604 of whom 413, 580 are males and 411,024 females (Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning 1991) and its estimated population for 2000 is 1,128,500 (Ministry of Finance Planning and Economic Development 2000). The district has a total land area of 14,241 square kilometres of which 9,648.3 square kilometres is open water and 444.2 square kilometres is forested. However, the district has been divided in two that is Mukono and Kayunga. The approximate area for cultivation is 4,149.3 square kilometres, and 112,758.5 hectares is the approximate size of land under cultivation (Hoefsloot, 1997). Mabira Forest Reserve is one of the largest forest reserves in central Uganda (Roberts, 1994) and lies in area of gently undulating plains interrupted by flat-topped hills that are remnants of the ancient African peneplain. It lies in the counties of Buikwe and Nakifuma. Sixteen parishes with a total population of 78,154 persons reside within or immediately outside Mabira Forest Reserve. This large community has direct and indirect interactions with natural resources and would be vital in participating in collaborative management model.

Mabira Forest owes its existence to colonial history. It was established during the 1900 Buganda agreement and occupies a total area of 306 sq. km. with an altitudinal range of 1,070-1340 m. It is located at 54 km. from Kampala, the capital city of Uganda. The vegetation is classified as medium altitude moist semi-deciduous, which

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Conservation Unit, September 2000.
[33] Government of Uganda: *The Uganda Wildlife Statute, Statute Supplement No.14 of May 1996.*
Uganda Government Printers and Publishers Corporation, Entebbe, Uganda.

has been highly influenced by human activities (Tindyebwa, 1993). The forest reserve is demarcated by boundaries marked by earth cains built over concrete boundary marks at each corner, with cleared foot path between the cains. There are also direction trenches at the corners with *Cassia Spectabilis* planted as live marks, which are now tall enough for visual recognition.

The ecological conditions of the forest reserve comprise rich flora and fauna, despite the encroachment by human influences such as cultivation, settlement and timber cutting by small pitsawers. Most of the forest reserve is secondary forest. The forest reserve has experienced extinction of large animals such as elephants and buffaloes but what remain in plenty are birds, forest primates, insects and reptiles.

Management of Mabira Forest Reserve: The management of the forest reserve has been changing following different historic events in which different management plans were drawn. These management plans had differential impacts on the forest as a natural resource because of differential policy implications. It was first gazetted as a central forest reserve in 1932[34] and regazetted in 1962[35] covering 29,974 hectares, and was separated from Namakupa, which was gazetted with a land area of 280 hectares. The gazetted area of the forest reserve is 30,691 hectares, which is divided into two blocks namely Mabira East and Mabira West separated by Misambya River and its swamp. The forest blocks are divided into 65 compartments, Mabira West with 25 compartments from 211 - 235 and Mabira East with 40 compartments from 171- 210.

Between 1948- 1957, the Sangster Management Plan was drawn. Its overall aim was to have maximum timber yields using the most efficient methods. This involved granting timber concessions, promotion of silviculture and setting up one of the areas as a nature reserve. In 1961-1971, the Webster Management Plan was drawn. Although it had similar objectives with the first plan, it went further in prescribing the working production cycle and allocation of research plots. The Mugumya-Nyindo 1993 -1994 Interim Management Plan was also drawn up and its overall objective was the attainment of the multiple-use management system.

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[34] See Legal notice No. 87 of 1932.
[35] See Legal notice No. 78 of 1962.

The current Forest Management Plan for Mabira (1997-2007) includes a Community Participation Working Cycle under which the forest is supposed to be managed by a joint committee of local people and a Community Forest Management (CFM) committee at the Forest Department for all the forest reserves in the country. The Community Forest Management model for Mabira Forest aims at articulating the benefits, roles, rights and responsibilities of either parties so that each side is capable of carrying out their obligations and to demand an equitable share of benefits as well as use the forest resources profitably and sustainably.

Mabira Forest Eco-tourism Project

The project was started by the Uganda Forest Department in 1994 with the aim of promoting forest conservation by providing sustainable income from the forest for the local people. The project operates an eco-tourism site at Najjembe village, which is operated by the Forest Department with advice from an Eco-tourism Advisory Committee, which is made up of elected representatives from the communities adjacent to the tourism site. In all, there are twenty-seven members that make up this committee. These are categorised as two persons from each of the ten villages and it is mandatory that one of the representatives would be a woman. There are also two representatives, one from the agriculture section at the district, one from the political wing/administration and the forest officer who represents the department.

The project is currently operating in 4 parishes, Nsakya, Buvunya, Kinoni and Buwora. At village level, the project covers 10 villages namely Nsakya A, Nsakya B, Dangara, Mabango, Ssese and Kasokoso in Nsakya parish, Buvunya in Buvunya parish, Buryasi in Kinoni parish, and Nkaaga, Bakata and Ssanga in Buwora parish. In Nsakya parish, there are many villages compared to the rest because they are near the forest and that is where the project started.

In the Mabira Forest Eco-tourism Project the main actors are the central government representatives (Forest Department), the donors (European Union), the Tourism Advisory Committee, Schools, Local drama groups, Youth groups, Najjembe Market and NGOs, particularly the Uganda Community Tourism Association (UCOTA) and Feed the Children.

4.2.1 Actors involved in Mabira Eco- Tourism Project

Tourism Advisory Committee: The committee is crucial in the implementation of the Mabira Eco- Tourism Project. The Advisory Committee, which was formed in 1995, is composed of twenty two persons from different villages in addition to two representatives from the Sub county, one from the Agriculture and Extension, one from the political wing and the Forest Officer as a representative of the department. The major activities so far carried out by the committee are sensitisation, soliciting community views on the forest and its usefulness, and encouraging people to plant trees.

There is emphasis on gender representation in form of affirmative action. It was revealed that, at village level, there was a condition that each of the village representatives had to be a woman. According to them, this was to bring gender balance in representation on the committees. It was also noted in the women's focus group discussion in Nsakya B that there was recognition that women were heavily involved in environmentally-related activities such as fuel wood gathering, grazing animals, collection of fruits, crop cultivation, among others. Therefore, missing women in the conservation issues would be detrimental to the forest.

The election process according to the project staff and committee members was democratic. If this was done, it would ensure that only those believed and known to be able to represent their interest without bias are elected. However, some members of the community said, they are not aware of this election process. In one focus group discussion, members of the community in Nsakya B, expressed ignorance about this. They had this to say:

> *"We as community members, we never elected any of the representatives. We are not even aware as to how they joined the project. In fact this is the first time our representative has mobilised us."*

Another community member from Kasokoso said:

"*I was surprised to find them in Mabira and questioned myself who elected them*".

Such statements are contrary to the notion of downward accountability. It should go with transparent and strong mechanisms of information-sharing and what is to be shared, which is not the case here.

To further show how undemocratic the process was, one other informant from the Forest Department reported:

> "*In order to ensure democratic elections, the Volunteer Service Officer attempted to remove the current Advisory Committee members but they strongly resisted arguing that they had not done much for the communities. To him, this meant that they were not sure that they would be elected. He further narrated that their term of office is not clearly specified since they sat with the then Forest Officer whom they convinced and he accepted.*"

One other Forest Department staff reported:

> "*the election of these committee members was not democratic. When they wanted to form these committees, the Volunteer Service Officer wrote to the Sub counties informing each village to send two representatives. When these letters were taken to the villages, automatically the chairman and secretary women affairs came because the letter stated the representatives had to be male and female.*"

This kind of practice did not give options to communities to participate in elections since it was restrictive.

All the members of the committee indicated that letters were sent to respective Sub counties from the Tourist Centre requesting for villages to send representatives. This was a directive that did not give a chance to the community to elect representatives, which points to top-down approaches. Much as the emphasis is on participation of communities in the collaborative management, it is clear that they were not consulted before the process was started. Lack of consultation implies that marrying community interests with those of the implementers is difficult. There is a likelihood that community interests might clash with those of conservationists.

In Kasokoso, it was revealed that members of the Local Councils nominated two names as requested without informing other members of the community. Although this indicates that Local Councils make important decisions on behalf of the community, it also shows limited transparency by the leaders. Local Councils possess too much power, which does not give room for others to participate until their

interests have been catered for. There is a feeling among the people of Kasokoso that the best person to represent them would have been the Secretary for Production and Environment. However, this position had not been created within the decentralised local government structure at the time when these committees were instituted. Although the committee is dominated by Local Councils, the target was not Local Councils implying that the selection criteria aimed at all inclusiveness. However, the dominance of Local Councils on the committees may imply limited representation of the community. In other cases there was biased representation because letters for nomination of committee members were sent from Mabira Eco-Tourism Project to the Local Council leaders. Instead of convening community meetings to for the selection process, the leaders appointed themselves to the committee. Using the existing structures would mean increased workload for such committees. This would, therefore, necessitate formation of new structures with clear implementation guidelines.

Information flow between the Advisory Committee members and communities is weak. It shows a one-way mechanism in which information is passed on from the centre to communities without being questioned. This may lead to limited understanding of the project role. In fact this was revealed by different responses from communities that justify limited knowledge about the project. The common responses were that it is a centre for the English people and a place for watching plays. This implies that enough consultations were not done which limits people's participation. One focus group discussion for women in Kasokoso observed:

> " We just receive information from the project on what they do not want us to do such as timber cutting, charcoal burning, illegal hunting. They just inform us, we do not have room to question what they have told us."

In other instances communities are not aware of the activities of the Eco-Tourism project. Two of the respondents had this to say: *"We would like to elect new people who will inform us of everything that takes place." "We are not sure whether the person who represents us says anything because she just keeps quiet."*

At the administrative level, the Advisory Committee members present village reports to the Forest Department staff during the monthly meetings. One limitation with such a mode of transferring information is that there is heavy reliance on what committee member's report, which requires strong monitoring mechanism by the Forest

Department staff. Relying on such information promotes illegal activities by some of the members of the committee since communities are not fully informed about the roles and power boundaries of their representatives. In this light one staff member reported:

> *"Some of the Advisory committee members who are involved in illegal activities go back and tell community members that they have the mandate to harvest forest products because of the link they have with the Forest Department"*

The Forest Department: The Forest Department initiated the collaborative management mode of implementing decentralised policies within the Mabira Eco-tourism project. The department is part and parcel of the management and implementation of the forest policies. They are represented on the Advisory Committee and are answerable to the Forest Department at the national and district levels. They are in charge of the whole management of Mabira Forest Reserve and also implement government policies and programmes. The Forest Department at the district represents state interests as one District Forest Officer rightly said, *"much as we operate within the decentralised context, the department represents the interests of the Forest Department."* The district forest office attends council meetings and informs them of all the activities. They also have established links with communities within and around the forest reserve through recruitment, extension services and hosting the local community meetings and drama activities. For example they recruited the local people with skills to assist in implementation and to make them feel part of the project. A total of 11 people were recruited from the communities, who have been instrumental in terms of implementation, for example, sensitisation activities on forest rights.

The NGOs, donors and Community-Based Groups: It is important to note that the donors facilitate the implementation of collaborative management. European Union has been instrumental in the provision of funds to run the forest activities. The mandate of the organisation to support natural forest rehabilitation programme is in-built in the 1988 Uganda Forest Policy when an agreement was signed with the government to support natural forest management and conservation. However, one cannot ignore the influential role donors have played in environmental decentralisation. There is an indication that that they influence the nature of activities

to be implemented and policies drawn in order to cater for their interests. Much as the government emphasises collaborative management, there are clear indications that the European Union has keen interest in this area of nature conservation. Apart from provision of funds, the project staff are not aware of the other mechanisms through which they influence the activities.

Among the Non-governmental organisations, Uganda Community Tourism Association (UCOTA), provides funds for women income-generating activities. This is an incentive towards better conservation because the money generated can be used to purchase substitutes such as charcoal and paraffin. In addition, the local community based groups are important in extending conservation messages focusing on environmental protection. Accountability mechanisms between communities and these groups follow an upward trend through their group leaders. Much as communities decide on which projects to embark on, one cannot say that they have power over this. Their decisions are much influenced by the activities of the project staff.

Local Government officials/representatives: Among these is the Local Council structure. This is important since it ensures that the forest resources are protected. The legal framework gives them power to make local by-laws, some of which cover protection of the environment. It was revealed that the Local Councils help in checking illegal activities. In Kasokoso, Local Councils indicated that they had the right to screen whoever was going to the forest. Others include the Sub-county local council representative and Agriculture Extension Staff. These are important agents for community mobilisation. The government representatives on these committees are few. This makes it difficult to articulate the interests, which does not lead to downward accountability and influencing the outcomes (Agrawal and Ribot 2000). What would help them in influencing the decisions is the fact that the committee is dominated by Local council representatives.

4.2.2 Nature of powers devolved

The idea behind formation of the committee was to make sure that the community is part of the decision-making process. In this perspective, a discussion with the staff from Mabira Eco-Tourism Project revealed that the committee makes theoretical

decisions. We call them theoretical because they do not translate decisions into action. Two of the officers had this to say:

> *"Presently, the committee does not have power to implement the decisions."*
> *"They are handicapped by the forest department, they sit here for formality, they do not have powers to decide on anything. They work on instructions from the forest department."*

This was corroborated by with information from the members of the committee. They emphasised that they do not have powers to arrest those who deviate from the local bylaws with regard to the conservation of the forest reserve. Some of the bylaws include cutting of trees without a permit, collection of firewood for commercial purposes, grazing animals in the forest, etc. One female participant in the focus group discussion with committee members had this to say: *"Tulinga ba Mawulire. Tetulina buyinza okukwata omuntu yyena"* meaning that they are like news reporters and that they do not have the power to arrest anybody.

One other youth noted that when you see someone cutting the trees or performing any illegal activity, you just hide yourself so that the person does not see you and you just rush to the tourism centre to report. Communities are thus in a moral dilemma to enforce the local bylaws and to a greater extent determine accountability relations. If one does not come out in the open and warn the person trespassing in the forest reserve, there is a danger that illegal activities are likely to continue.

Another decision-making aspect was the aspect of checking abuse of power among committee members. All the committee members pointed out that they have the power to dismiss any member who performs activities, which are contrary to the objectives and bylaws of conservation. Before the final decision is taken, evidence is gathered from communities in order to establish the level of involvement in the reported illegal activities. This points to a crucial monitoring role and ensuring accountability by the communities.

4.2.3 Accountability relations

Accountability relations follow the normal patterns (downward and upward) within the Mabira Eco-Tourism Project. These levels can not be separated because of the

hierarchical nature in terms of structure of implementation, the decision-making levels and the nature of decentralisation.

At the national level, the forest reserves and the National Park still remain central state assets but the management and implementation of some forest-related activities have been decentralised. This, therefore, brings out differences in the nature of accountability. The Forest Officer based at Mabira Forest Reserve is directly accountable to the District Forest Officer (DFO), Mukono District and the Forest Department in Kampala. Accountability is in form of reports (financial and other monthly activities). In the case of financial accountability, revenue collected must be deposited to the local bank account in Lugazi by the Forest Officer and is later transferred to the European Union Account for the specific project of eco-tourism. All the reports are submitted to the District Forest Officer, Forest Manager Natural Forests, Commissioner- Forestry and a Team leader from the European Union project. The financial report goes to the database of the technical services department. This is because the person in charge has to inform the district on the status of the reserve in terms of activities and problems, among others.

Revenue collection is done locally by the staff based at the forest reserve. This should be monitored by the committee through monthly meetings and planning activities for communities. The revenue collected goes to the consolidated government account. In the initial phases of the project, its was indicated that its distribution would follow the Forest Department policy that 40% of the revenue collected would go back to the community. One forest officer in Kampala asserted that the position of revenue generated is still unclear because of lack of reconciliation between the government's procedure and the Lome Convention to which Uganda is a signatory. However, revenue should be from the district, from the sales of forestry resources such as timber, charcoal and firewood, not from the project. The channel through which it should reach communities would be Sub-counties.

The use of revenue from the project is only indirect through communities writing proposals to be funded. This has created confusion among communities in that they confuse the 40% from the district with that of the project. However, the staff emphasised that whenever they go to the communities, they are always asked about

the 40% they are supposed to receive from the Forest Department. The Forest Department staff acknowledge that it was a mistake and the explanation to the communities is that there are no clear instructions in the European Union /EEC forestry project on how the revenue should be shared. This lack of clarity about revenue sharing points to limited consultation during the process when the Eco-tourism project was written. It is a fact that revenue sharing schemes have not worked although community's awareness about it is high. The implementers have shied away from telling the communities the truth since they themselves do not have adequate information and lack clear guidelines of such revenue sharing schemes. The demand for revenue is high and would be an incentive to increased community participation and improved accountability. However, lack of decisions over the revenue by the Forest Department jeopardises their work since they are often asked what they cannot effectively explain to the satisfaction of communities.

There is a new innovation with regard to revenue sharing. The Forest Department staff and Volunteer Service Officers have been going around in the villages to solicit for proposals for viable projects to fund. It was revealed that there was Ug Shs 15 million in the Forest Department for communities around the forest to utilise, in order to provide income to these communities so that they withdraw from illegal exploitation. This is more consultative because communities are given a chance to explore their problems and come up with priorities.

The Advisory Committee is accountable to the staff implementing the Eco-tourism project and the communities whom they represent. It is evident that the committee is accountable to the forest staff through the monthly meetings once a week in which they report on the status of implementation in terms of problems, positive responses which are indicative of the achievements and the shortfalls within their areas of jurisdiction. A review of the minutes of the meetings revealed that the attendance for these meetings was high, the lowest being 19 and the highest being 34. At each meeting Ug Shs 5000/= is given as an allowance.

However, discussions with communities point to limited accountability by the Advisory Committee members. Many of the respondents expressed ignorance about the activities of the committee. Some of the explanations include:

"We know that they meet but they have never brought back the message."
"The problem is that they have never called us and we explain our position."
"Representatives have not informed us of anything that takes place in the project."

Lack of proper accountability has, for instance, led to growing suspicion among communities towards the tourists. This arises out of the inability of the Advisory Committee members to explain exactly what is happening in the project. One youth group in Nsakya B had this to say, *"We do not know the activities of the English people who camp here. We suppose that they get access to certain animals."* While listening to village reports from committee members, a similar suspicion was expressed by some members of the Advisory Committee. They indicated that they were not sure about the activities of a white couple who were seen several times looking at the birds and they thought that they were injecting the birds since they were using strange machines. This was only explained by the tourist guide in a meeting. This is an indication of lack of proper information even within the management structure. It is five years since the committee was instituted but it is interesting to note that they could not actually understand the activities of the tourists. However, at another level, this is a strong community observation because it shows their concerns about protecting the environment and the resources within it.

The discussions with the Committee members further revealed that they take back conservation messages to the communities. This is done through calling community meetings in which they discuss conservation issues and any other environment-related problem. However, one interesting thing to note is that they use the chance of LC meetings, as one member on the advisory committee noted: *'We get a chance to talk to community members about the information obtained from the tourist centre."*

Some of the means identified in which communities ensure that their representatives are accountable are not very different from those of others. It was reported that community members call meetings to discuss issues of concern about their representatives, and in some other instances they report to the Eco-tourism Project staff. This is a positive collective action in which community concerns can be taken into consideration or given due attention. There is also a possibility that community members have the ability to remove their representatives since they are the ones who

elected them. One such case in which communities demanded explanations was in Nsakya B where they complained about limited access to certain resources, mainly water and firewood. They explained in the focus group discussion:

> *"We tried to complain in the Local Councils about the issue of water and firewood. They had not wanted us to collect the water from the forest. We called a meeting involving the community and the Forest Department. They read for us the bylaws and all of us left the meeting contented"*

This shows that the bylaws were not drawn after consultations with the communities.

On the negative side, it is still evident that people who are well known by the forest office are still poaching the animals. This in itself indicates poor accountability mechanisms, which are likely to continue draining the eco-tourism site. In addition to this, the Youth group in Mabira consistently reported that officers from the Forest Department aid them in exploiting the forest. They noted that this is a big problem as they reported, *"We have linkages with Forest Department in exploiting the trees. Even when you are transporting the timber no one questions."*

5.0   ECOLOGICAL AND SOCIAL OUTCOMES

There are positive and negative ecological and social effects associated with collaborative management in the two districts. While some of the outcomes are area-specific, others are common to both areas. Some of the outcomes can be directly tagged to the established institutions (Resource User Committee and Advisory Committee through ensuring that local bylaws are adhered to and have positive implications for limiting illegal activities. In addition, the non-governmental organisations and community-based groups indirectly influence the adoption of conservation messages through sensitisation and demonstration activities. Arising out of this, the major changes reported were: an increase in wild animal population; regeneration of forest and its extension to the boundaries in Mbale; weather change; increase in wood lots on public land and increase in terrace coverage (in Ulukusi). Other outcomes include improved communication; external linkages; access to natural resources among communities; growth and expansion of the market and employment

generation. On the negative outcomes, there are transparency-related problems and resistance to change.

5.1 Positive Ecological Outcomes

Almost all the respondents interviewed pointed out that there has been general improvement in the conservation of the forest/National Park when they compare with the previous scenarios before the projects. Informants noted that the areas had been heavily degraded, but they appreciated that there is tremendous change as seen by regeneration of trees. Although the activities cannot wholly be attributed to the establishment of the Resource User Committee and the Tourism Advisory Committee, there is little doubt that they have contributed a lot in conservation.

Rigorous monitoring by the Advisory Committee can be seen as the reason for a decrease in illegal activities. Reductions in illegal activities indirectly influence tree growth in areas where the trees would have been cut. The Monthly Report of June 2000 revealed that there has been general decline in illegal activities, which was attributed to rigorous monitoring activities. In the whole month, only one case of illegal pitsawing was reported. Other benefits included recovery by the police of 10 beams of Musizi description 8x4 x 14 ft. These were confiscated on the way towards Mabira Police Post. In the same month, there were no cases of charcoal burning, firewood collection for commercial purposes and hunting.

One tourist guide also pointed out that among the villages so far involved in the project, Nsakya B would be regarded a model village in terms of conservation a factor he attributed to proximity to the tourist centre. For the period 1998, Nsakya B, Buwoola, Sanga, Bulyasi, Kasokoso, Nkaaga, Buvunya, Ssese had no illegal activities reported (Village reports for 1998). A total of 26 cases were reported in 1999, a total of 32 cases were reported and in 2000 up to June 21 cases were reported. There was an increase by 4 cases reported between 1998 and 1999. The recording of cases by month also showed a general trend in increases or decreases in the cases reported. For all the villages, January, November and December had the highest number of cases reported while May and October had the lowest cases reported. The high cases in the

above-named period's reveal the communities desire to meet households needs towards special days.

Households' responsiveness to the planting of trees has improved something attributed to the effects of conservation messages. Although the idea behind the planting of trees does not necessarily mean conservation, given the variance in households needs such as planting trees for income, fuel wood, provision of poles and fruits, this is important for conservation because of reduced pressure on protected resources. For example, there is the local drama group that has been passing on conservation messages through songs and plays and Environmental Education Coordinators Committee that is represented by thirty four teachers from the surrounding schools. Conservation competitions have also been organised among the 27 surrounding schools, which assist in furthering the conservation message not only among children but parents as well since they are main audience in these competitions.[36] The results of such activities have been the planting of trees such as *Musizi*, *Mituba*, Ovacado, in the compounds. Tree nurseries have also been established which enable households and schools to access tree seedlings with ease. The schools adjacent to Mabira forest have also planted trees in school compounds, dug gabbage bins and sorted gabbage. However, there are area variations as regards the quantities planted. In Nsakya B area in Mabira and Ulukusi, respondents mentioned land as the major limiting factor to plant many trees since majority owned plots. Despite this limitation, it was pointed out that on average the majority of the people had planted five trees. This is an indication that if more land was available, more trees would be planted. Although in Kasokoso, respondents pointed out the same complaint, the level of fragmentation was different in that household's were able to plant trees in gardens as well as compounds. In Ulukusi the respondents reported that out of every 10 households, 9 had planted trees. This has positive bearing on the reduction in illegal activities as one member of the Resource User Committee noted:

> *"These days, very few people try to get firewood from the forest as compared to before-scenario. In a month or year, you only hear 5 cases of people who got timber illegally from the forest."*

Household's responsiveness, therefore, implies that in the long run, there will be sustenance of household's energy and timber requirements.

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[36] This information is only referring to Mabira Ec-tourism Project.

The realisation of alternative sources of energy and the desire to obtain alternative sources of income is also important for the conservation of the forest reserve. It was revealed that people had reached the extent of purchasing firewood to supplement what they collected from the forest. This was commonly noted in Nsakya B where there was limited access to the forest to collect firewood, unlike in Kasokoso where the respondents collected firewood uncontrollably so long as they collected dead wood. It was also indicated that people were trying to graze cows, keep chicken chicken and pigs as alternative sources of income, which enable households purchase alternative sources of fuel. The same practice, particularly in the area of conservation was noted in Mbale. Although the initiatives are more external in character, what matters is the outcome. The Mt Elgon Conservation and Development Project has encouraged the planting of napier grass, zero-grazing of cows and the use of fuel-saving stoves. These are important initiatives because of the withdraw effect they have on the forest.

All the communities in Mabira agreed that conservation of the forest has ensured regularity of the rainfall and the amount received. The explanation before and after the conservation revealed that during the time when the forest was exposed to intense cultivation under the Amin regime, the rainfall pattern had changed. They indicated that there was too much sunshine which eventually affected crop productivity. They were all happy to note that the rainfall occurred in what used to be dry months - December and January. This had enabled continuous cultivation of crops and thus continuous yields. In addition, the planting of trees had provided cold conditions, which they often termed in Luganda as "*empewo enyogoga.*" The same positive outcome was noted in Mbale where respondents pointed out that the climate was no longer hot as it used to be. The reasons why one would attribute climate change to the activities of the institutions are based on the pre-scenario and current scenarios. Information from focus group discussions on the history of Mabira forest revealed the following changes[37] These give clear indications of heavily degraded forests that were

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[37]" President Amin gave us the forest and we started cultivating matooke, pumpkins, cassava and maize and we generated all the wealth. The forest exploitation encouraged many farmers from different parts of Uganda and some others were strong businesspersons from Kampala. Many built houses for the labourers while others built permanent houses. At first accessing the forest was free but later people started paying depending on the amount of land one wanted. One acre of land costed 3500/= but no

characterised by a lot of sunshine as compared to the environmental changes since the projects started. However, one cannot ignore other indirect factors such as change in environmental conditions due to global warming, which has been associated with more rain. The extent to which community links the forest cover and rain would be important for internalising conservation messages.

In addition, tree growth is also associated with the re-emergence of animals and birds that had almost become extinct. Communities pointed out that they have a variety of animals such as pigs, antelopes and birds and snakes. Some of the Advisory Committee members in the Mabira Forest Reserve appreciated the important role of such animals as attracting tourists to the area, which contributes to development through the revenue generated. In Mbale, the local officials appreciated the multiplication of animals, mainly baboons, chimpanzees and snakes but their useful potential was not articulated.

5.2 Social outcomes

It is critical to note that the participation of communities in environmental activities has enhanced attitude change at two levels, the forest as a resource and staff as implementers of the forest policies. It was noted that before the projects started, the people just saw the forest, exploited it while knowing that they were destructive but

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agreements were made. However, we were no allowed to cut some trees, which were marked by the FD officials, dig holes for toilets, plant coffee and build houses. The reason behind this was to deny the people to claim ownership rights. The major implements used were hand hoe, axe and tractors were not allowed. This implied use of manual labour provided by families and hired labour for those who had big patches of land. The soils did not require use of fertilisers because they were very productive and the yields were very high.

Cultivation and other illegal activities continued during Obote II regime. The only difference was that during this time our food crops were up-rooted. Much as we were generating wealth from the forest, there was change in climate. During this time there was a lot of sunshine and shortage of rain.

All this was reversed when President Museveni came to power in 1986. The evictions started in 1988 to 1989. We were told to leave the forest and stop cultivating. This information was passed on from the FD and the radio. At first people could not believe it but when the people from the FD together with the army men started coming, we had to leave the forest. In some other areas such as Namavundu where people had built permanent houses, schools and had other social facilities had refused to leave the forest. Forced evictions came up, others were beaten, and in some areas such as around Nsakya, matooke were cut. The people of Kasokoso once told to get out of the forest, they did so willingly. For them they had not constructed houses in the forest. The good thing with our area, we were allowed to continue harvesting matooke until the yields declined and each of us could not identify their gardens. Because of tree growth, we can boast of fresh air, more and regular rainfall, which had changed. It is important to note that these are communities explanations which are not based on a detailed account of rainfall changes over the years (information form focus group discussions).

did not think of the negative outcomes. In one focus group discussion in Nsakya B,
men noted:

> *"People have changed. We now have big trees, which were not there at the*
> *time. Even before, the people knew the value of the forest but it was destroyed*
> *because of the weakness in the government at the time."*

The women focus group discussion in Kasokoso, when asked whether they would go
back to cultivate in the forest once they would be allowed to do so, insisted that they
would not do it because of what they have benefited. The benefits they referred to
were regularity of rain that had enabled continuous production of crops that are sold
in the market. When given another alternative, which would involve their husbands,
they only indicated that they would only follow their husbands but not they
themselves as having taken the initiative. One other response that came up was an
indication that some households stay without food due to lack of money to buy
charcoal: *"oyinza nokusura enjala amanda nogagula mu town".* In another example,
women indicated *"We can only go the forest to make trails and plant trees once*
requested by the Forest Department." This also could imply change not arising out of
the community's willingness because of the restrictive bylaws, which have to be
adhered to. Those who cannot stand such a situation are deviants and are punished
once they are got.

The establishment of the committees was also noted to have led to improved
relationship between the Forest Department, Mt Elgon National Park and the
communities. This relationship had been affected because of the evictions, which
were undertaken in the 1988-89 period.   People's livelihood patterns changed in that
they lost their food, all the wealth had been affected because they had not been
compensated and others lost their lives.   There was destitution and resulting poverty
for those who had migrated from different parts of the country to come and cultivate
in the forest. In most cases, those who had sold their land had to start a new life
altogether. Those who came from the proximity to the forest were also affected
because they had abandoned their gardens and saw the forest as the main source of
livelihood. One respondent observed thus:

> *"Many people had been convinced by the then park rangers in the 1970s and*
> *sold their land to go and buy in the forest. Unfortunately, in 1989, all this land*

was lost due to forced evictions. Nobody was compensated... Many of these people now suffer from food insecurity, poverty and landlessness."

As a result of the above problems, some community members used to put nails on the roads where Forest Department cars and motorcycles passed, there was no interaction between the Forest Department and communities and to some respondents in Nsakya B, the reasons for evictions were not clear. These poor relations have changed and communities are in constant touch with the projects through their representatives. In Mbale it was indicated that the mere fact that the community obtained audience from the project and could access certain resources meant a lot to them since the time of evictions. Such consultations, communities observed, were happening for the first time. To them the formation of Resource User Committee was an important avenue in which they would negotiate for their lost land. They indicated that the methods used to evict them were very bad, particularly beating, burning houses and cutting down their gardens. However, many indicated that they had gone to cultivate while knowing that it was a government asset.

The legal framework and the policies clearly stipulate what communities should access. In this regard, those who have responded positively know their rights in terms of access and utilisation of forest resources. They follow the local bylaws, which prohibit and give guidelines on what they should exploit and what they should not. Communities are allowed to harvest certain quantities of herbs for domestic use, weaving materials, harvest fruits, yams, fuel wood, water and timber for building.[38] They are also allowed to cut trees after obtaining permits. However, members also noted that the procedure for obtaining these permits is so complicated that it limits their participation. The resources communities used to access under the collaborative arrangement in Ulukusi included dry wood for firewood and construction, green vegetables and mushrooms, bamboo, herbs and access to the rocky worshiping place. In the current situation, these are only accessed illegally since the agreement expired and UWA-FACE does not allow them.

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[38] All the respondents in Mabira forest reported that they access timber for building only when they have approached the Forest Officers who allocate certain quantities. For the rest of the mentioned resources, communities do not require consultation.

There is a dramatic change in the number of resource users, which can be attributed to state-related factors and some from the collaborative management. The state related factors take the upper hand in changing the number of users through the policy of forced evictions as explained in the text. With collaborative management, Management Committees were established and these act as watchdogs and have extended conservation messages that are critical in attitude change and, in the case of Mabira, the growth and expansion of the market. There has been an increase in the number of market vendors from fifty when the project started to approximately three hundred thousand. The people who used to cut the trees have benefited from the establishment of the tourist centre in that they now sell tourism-related goods in the nearby market. In one focus group discussion, women revealed that: *"Obwavu bwali nga bututta naye kati embeera zaffe nnungi"* meaning that poverty was almost killing them but now the financial situation has improved. This indirectly improved the forest because the tourist site has acted as an alternative source of income and, therefore, has created less dependency on the forest. Other alternatives mentioned apart from the market are the establishment of shops, tailoring projects, zero-grazing and chicken rearing. The incomes earned from these activities have enabled the communities to purchase timber for construction and grass for their animals. In addition, the establishment of the tourism centre has attracted foreign visitors, students and hosts environment-related and other activities. When these different categories of people come, the market activities are boosted greatly.

Some community members appreciate the contribution of the project in terms of revenue generation while others cannot actually reveal the positive contribution. This aspect of revenue sharing was evident in Mabira but not in Mbale. Reports from Mt Elgon National Park staff indicate that they were in the final stages of putting such an arrangement in place. It was also noted that the money got by UWA-FACE officials from the fines is sent to the district. Those who appreciated its contribution pointed out there has been revenue generated from the tourists which assisted in the purchase of materials like chairs and benches for the surrounding schools. However, this was only for a short time. The explanation for lack of continued support by the Forest Department staff was that they had made a mistake that it was not in the original plan to share out the benefits in such a manner. To some other sections, they are not aware and mostly indicated that they just see the tourists and students come to the tourism

centre. One community member indicated: *"They just come to see their property."* This is an accountability issue, which not only affects the staff but also the community representatives as well. They are no clear guidelines as to how the revenue collected from the Eco-Tourism project should be shared out although the Tourism Plan states that 40% should go back to communities. One of the officers stated: *"A verbal directive came from the Forest Department that money should be given to communities."* Figures for the period 1999 and 2000 reveal differences in the revenue collected. The highest was 1.5 million while the lowest was 645,000/=. Of great importance is the fact that the amount of revenue does not correspond to the number of visitors registered. It was also reported that major occurrences in the country also influence the number of visitors received and thus the revenue. Such quoted occurrence was the *"Ebola"* outbreak, which greatly affected the number of tourists coming in.

The Eco-tourism project has created employment opportunities for the communities around the forest. Out of the 14 people employed at the tourism centre, only 3 are not from the communities the (Volunteer Service Organisation, Forest Officer and the Forest Ranger). Communities are happy because some of their children got employment and thus could earn income. In Mt Elgon National Park, UWA-FACE employs 125 regular workers because the coverage is big (North and South Mbale). During peak periods of planting, the organisation on average employs 150 casual workers. Although the recruitment of local people is provided for in the process of collaboration, it reinforces the top-down process. Recruitment of the staff is still centralised in both areas and the local people are not aware as to how they were recruited. Although the Advisory Committee members know that the staff are accountable to them, the mechanism of enforcing accountability remains weak. That is why in cases like that of the Mbale, Resource User Committee cannot reprimand the staff even though they are not happy about their activities. The only means to counteract the activities was to cut the tree seedlings that had been planted.

The involvement in the project has created external linkages and raised community concerns about other environment-related problems such as pollution. For example, the tourism staff in conjunction with the Uganda Community Tourism Association organised a meeting on 16 May 2000 to discuss with the Ssezibwa Falls Community

Tourism. Community representatives had also written letters requesting for NEMA's intervention about Musyanya river, which has been polluted by the sugar factories. However, they have not been successful in this venture and it appears their efforts have been somehow frustrated. New farming methods have been learnt and also information shared out through the exchange visits particularly in Mabira forest, where some community members visited Masaka and Kapchorwa. In Ulukusi, one of the community members undertook a training course still in the area of improved farming practices.

New innovations have been instituted for better monitoring of the forest. In Kasokoso, communities have instituted a defence structure embracing the principle of the Local Council system. This entailed the expansion of the defence unit in the area, with additional 9 members. This was put in place in order to strengthen the monitoring of the forest. However, they indicated that the forest was big and, therefore, they lacked necessary logistics (boots and facilitation allowance) to effectively perform their activities. They envisaged collective effort as the only way to minimise illegal forest activities. In Mbale the problems were similar because the Resource User Committee members reported that they were not given any form of facilitation even when they attended the meetings. Facilitation of the representatives is an incentive for greater participation. The spirit of voluntarism cannot yield positive results because people have other priorities to address.

5.3 Negative ecological outcomes

Much as the increase in rainfall and fall in weather temperatures was appreciated by the majority of the respondents, there were also high sentiments on how these conditions negatively affected crop productivity. This was reported particularly in Ulukusi pilot parish. The crops affected were cabbages, beans and maize. One female respondent said: *These days the coldness is too much and it burns crops grown adjacent to the forest…The tree shades make crops grow tall and thin.* Due to the mountainous nature of Ulukusi, it was noted that heavy rains are also a problem. When it rains all the topsoil is washed down, including some of the grass, which was planted to hold the terraces.

All the respondents in Ulukusi, complained that eucalyptus trees are detrimental in various ways particularly affecting crop productivity and draining the soil. The popularization of the tree did not consider the negative effects it would have on the communities. The fact that land is a big problem in Mbale implies that the trees are grown with other crops such as bananas, maize, yams, etc. The draining capacity for such trees is high which has led to a decline in crop production. The observation by the researchers also confirmed this. This has strong implications for household food security and the general livelihood status. In Mabira, communities are aware of the negative effects of this specie and they refused to grow it much as it was popularised by the project. Much as the people in Ulukusi are aware of this danger, they continue to grow the trees because they do not have any alternative source of fuel and they are also faced with a problem of choice. Although this is beneficial to the environment, it has negative implications for household food security. This, to a large extent, can be associated with increased participation of communities in environmental activities that has led to high adoption levels.

Vermin was also a common problem voiced by communities in all the districts. In Mabira this was particularly noted in Kasokoso where informants indicated that the protection of the forest, has provided favourable conditions for the animals. Those identified as destructive to crops were wild pigs; and communities reported that they were very difficult to stop. The same problem was mentioned in Ulukusi where informants reported that wild animals were destructive to their crops.

5.4 Negative Social Outcomes

The major negative social outcome was continued illegal activities for various purposes such as commercial exploitation for timber, building, charcoal, firewood, and debarking of trees, grazing. This arises out of the inability of the resource user groups[39] to ably meet their demands in addition to the desire to gain economically as the forest provides a main source of livelihood. For example in the May Report of 2000 for the Mabira Eco-Tourism project, the major problems were pitsawing and debarking of trees. The most affected type of tree is *Warrbughia* which activity was

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[39] The resource user groups referred to here are fuel wood collectors, timber harvesters, building poles harvesters, livestock grazers, wild game hunters, bamboo collectors, medicinal plant users, weaving materials collectors. Some of these perform illegal activities to meet household needs and some do it

prevalent in Gangu area in Mabira. Most people in this area were reported to have established links with Salompas Pharmaceuticals. In this regard, two culprits had been arrested. Other illegal activities included harvesting of rattan canes, hunting lizards and snakes, firewood for commercial purposes, and burning bricks, grazing animals and dumping rubbish which was particular to Nsakya B. In Kasokoso, hunting of antelopes was still prevalent because of its value for meat and debarking of trees was still evident. In Ulukusi, a number of people still encroached the forest trees for timber. On the way to the study area, the researcher met with illegal pit sawyers carrying timber from the forest. This practice has continued mainly at night because UWA-FACE officials only work during the day. The youth in Mabira noted that inhibiting them from illegal exploitation without giving them alternatives would not solve the current problem.

There has been a complaint by communities that there is limited access to the forest resources and what they are allowed to exploit. For example, fuel wood was not enough to meet the household needs. In Nsakya B, for example, respondents noted that they are allowed to harvest wood for two days, that is Saturday and Sunday, which makes them continue harvesting illegally. They indicated that the alternative sources of fuel they would have turned to, such as paraffin, are very expensive. In addition communities are not allowed to enter the Tourist Centre without paying a certain amount of money (for the adults it is 500/= while children pay 250/=). Communities are not happy about this pay something they see as an inhibition to freely access and enjoy the facilities at the centre yet, they were told that the project was theirs. In Ulukusi informants revealed that the quantities of resources they used to access were so insufficient. More so, the timetable set by Mt Elgon Conservation and Development Project about when to collect the resources was not suitable to particularly women's daily programmes. The two factors above partly contributed to the continued illegal harvesting of forest resources.

There is a conflict between Forest Department and the communities in regard to making decisions and control of boundaries, which becomes a source of conflict between these actors. In Nsakya B, for example, communities complained that the

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for commercial purposes, particularly timber harvesters, wood collectors, medicinal plant users.

hedge trees (eucalyptus) had overgrown and were very dangerous not only to their lives but their property and crops as well. One female respondent narrated how she was in her bathroom and was hit by the tree branch and almost lost her life. They indicated that they have complained to the forest department but nothing has so far been done.

6.0 Emerging issues for Accountability and Participation

The establishment of institutions and the involvement of other actors under collaborative management are important mechanisms through which communities can participate in decisions to manage the natural resources. They are also important channels through which downward accountability can be effected. An examination of the different institutions in natural resource management revealed different directions of accountability relations and power centres, which are critical in determining accountability and participation levels.

> *"Successful participation tends to be associated with transparent process. People are more likely to stick to the roles where they know how roles are where they pay taxes and know how revenues are generated are used, resource users are more likely to continue compliance. Where such transparency is absent, the opposite holds true" (Forest Department Public Relations office).*

In the Mabira Forest Reserve, although the relationship between communities and the Eco-tourism has improved, to the many members there is lack of a general understanding of what the project is all about. The project is associated with only the tourists. The intentions and how the communities would participate are not very clear. This has negative implications when one talks about community participation. The communities only know that they are supposed to conserve nature but the associated benefits are not clearly articulated. Their roles and involvement towards the resource, therefore, raise questions of interests and the content of the sensitisation messages. It is community representatives who understand the objectives of the project but detailed discussions revealed that they do not understand the actual dynamics. For example, they do not understand how revenue collected is retrieved back to communities. In the Mt Elgon National Park, the relationships have greatly improved save for the UWA-FACE foundation. Before the establishment of Resource User Committee, the project emphasised relationship building in the initial stages in which

the project was explained and the reasons why there was need for collaboration started. Therefore, representation without participation of communities will not lead to positive social and ecological outcomes.

Although the mechanisms of accountability among the staff and community representatives were clear, there was general lack of understanding that effective accountability is a detriment to community participation, and has a strong bearing on the ecological and social outcomes. The mechanisms of accountability by the staff, the Advisory and Resource User Committee only reinforce upward mechanisms, for example, reporting and collection of revenue. This means that local representative institutions have limited choice to question what has been implemented.

At community level, they were not aware as to how their representatives would be held accountable. This only happens when communities' discontent has gone beyond the level of tolerance that the communities act. One case was seen in Nsakya B where communities convened a meeting regarding the quantities of firewood to be harvested and limiting them to collect water from the forest. Community participation should therefore not be taken for granted. Agrawal and Ribot, (2000) found that resource user groups in Nepal, were being put to task by the members. Therefore, ensuring accountability should start from within before it extends to other actors.

The power dynamics were also interesting. Once power has been tasted, most people do not want to give it up. This was seen from the expression of the community representatives who felt that their term of office would be extended. Their argument was that they still had many tasks to accomplish. There is general feeling that many of the representatives would not come back if the elections were held. This is a question of performance and lack of downward accountability. Therefore, the thinking that elections are a measure of accountability can be misleading.

 The decision-making levels of the community representatives are also limited and indicate that the committees are powerless. They do not have power to arrest the offenders but in case of an offence they have to liaise with the local government structures. The complaint by community representatives in Mabira that they are like newspaper reporters justifies this powerless situation. They only possess the

monitoring role, which in a way reduces the costs of implementation. In Mt Elgon National Park communities complained about the failure to renew the agreement, which meant that, resource access was illegal and that the former agreement was more restrictive in terms of resource access. Powers to enforce rules and regulations remain with Uganda Wildlife Authority and the Forest Department, which are the arms of the state. This implies that statutory instruments in the name of participation have the intended objectives of achieving upward accountability. This is common with the new institutions created in the name of creating democratic forms of participation and representation (Ribot, 1999). The nature of rights granted to communities are also restrictive and therefore do not guarantee effective participation. Several complaints as regards resource access in terms of quantities, time of access and rights are clear example s. This makes it difficult for communities to challenge what is stipulated in the agreement.

Revenue sharing is part of the ways through which communities would benefit from the initiatives. This would indirectly influence community participation because of seeing visible benefits. Community's expectation of the revenue is high in the case of Mabira Eco-tourism project where part of the revenue collected was shared out while in the case of Mt Elgon National Park nothing has been shared out.

The issue of the youth involvement in conservation activities has not been fully addressed. This was identified as the most problematic group among low-income categories. Their attitude to work is low which makes their participation limited. Most of the informants pointed out that the youth do not want to work in the market, which is the available alternative. This situation creates more dependency on the exploitation of forest among the youth. The youth themselves confirmed this statement when they mentioned that they continue to exploit the forest because they do not have jobs. They stated:" *The resources are free. We still kill edible rats, wild pigs, antelopes although we know that it is illegal."*

Collaborative management in Mabira and Mbale is currently operating under environments where exploitation of the natural resources is on a limited scale. But even then the minimal exploitation that would have been to allow communities get benefits is complicated. One officer in Mabira said*: "With pit-sawing, one has to get*

a licence/permit. They were told to make an association, register it, get a bank account, and in turn get a permit. In fact, they paid money to start this association but this did not take off because of the problems within the forestry department at that time. So, these are still on a stand still. When they were holding the meetings, they threatened to burn the centre arguing that the money had "disappeared" from there. That is why illegal pit sawing is on the increase."

Some sections of the community have not fully grasped the idea of collaborative management. The sentiments by communities and continued illegal activities justify this. In Mbale, for example, communities are continuing to destroy young trees even when they do not want to use them. In Mabira, the local people in one instance threatened to burn the motorcycle of one of the forest guards and others beat him up. The explanation they gave was that guards hinder them from free exploitation of the wealth of the forest.

7.0   CONCLUSIONS

The two collaborative management models in Mabira Forest Reserve and Mt Elgon National Park almost started at the same time. However, one notes a difference in the process of implementation. While it is a requirement that communities are consulted before the collaboration starts, in the case of Mabira the process was not consultative. A directive came from the Forest Department staff for the pilot parishes to send two representatives. In Mbale, the process was more participatory in that it started with consultations with communities in order to make them aware and to appreciate the project.

However, the majority of the people associated the collaboration with positive outcomes. Communities now boast of more rain, income-generating activities and the general improvement in the conservation status. The main indicators to mark this change are the failure of individuals to identify their former gardens in the forest, the disappearance of paths, limited visibility and a lot of tree regeneration. Previously, the encroached areas had scattered and big trees, which were labeled by the Forest Department in the case of Mabira, and crops mainly bananas, cassava and other light crops. In the current, situation the forest is predominant. In one of the areas in Mabira,

the roads are almost non-existent. During the time of illegal exploitation, there were many cars carrying timber and food from the forest.

Not all the sections of the population embrace what has been introduced. Therefore, one notes some failure to internalise the whole issue of conservation. Communities wonder why animals enjoy what used to be their land and yet they are destructive to their crops. The implementation of the collaboration management still has challenges, major challenge being poverty as some informants reported: *"The idea of conservation is good but however much you sing about conservation when people are poor, there is no way they can abide by your singing."*

Although the major issues in decentralisation and collaborative management focus on increased participation of communities, benefit sharing and transferring decision making closer to the people, the operational framework still point to many limitations to the achievement of these aims. It is clear that most of decisions where power lies still remains with the central government. At what levels does community participate genuinely? What about the central government? When communities participate, does it mean that they own the resources?

It is also clear that revenue collection is decentralised but its sharing is centralised. This implies that its distribution has been taken for granted that it will automatically meet communities needs. After all the major community problems hinge around satisfaction of meeting basic needs. Important to note however, is the fact that their needs might be hierarchical. The focus on community projects although they were appreciated by communities in the Mabira Eco-Tourism project is a clear demonstration of lack of consultation. The demand questions cannot be underestimated. It is important to understand why the demand for revenue vis a vis resources is high.

It was also found out that the district relations between the districts and the projects are weak. This is because the district representatives are only co-opted on the projects. Although the Local Government Act 1997 guarantees the supervision of the activities by the districts, in the case of Uganda Wildlife Authority, it was reported to independently implement activities without consulting the technical committee at the

district. "*In fact they are not answerable in any way to the district.*" one district official remarked. This calls for strengthened relations and coordination between the government representatives and the districts.

The logic behind centralisation within decentralisation remains unclear to the majority of the people. Clear explanations as to why certain resources are decentralised while others are not are necessary in creating transparent and accountable local governance systems. As it is now, there are conflicting interests in the management of the resources between central and local governments. Does this mean that Local Governments do not have the capacity to control and manage central forest reserves? Why is it that the management and control of local forest reserves has been decentralised? However, devolution of control into unaccountable and unrepresentative institutions will not achieve the efficiency and equity goals (Ribot 2000).

It is also important to note that the performance of decentralised environmental structures is important. Although the links with the collaborative management were identified, these were not the focus of the study. This is an area that needs further focus to guide decetralisation policy in relation to the protection of the environment.

Skills' building for community representatives is an important aspect that should not be ignored in community participation. Perhaps the methods of community mobilisation are not clear and that is why the actual community members are not mobilised effectively. The mere fact that communities' understanding of the whole project is minimal implies that they do not actually understand the kind of partnership that exists and how it would help them.

It should be appreciated that collaborative management is a good attempt involving communities in managing resources that have been historically centrally controlled. This partnership although it has limitations in access, expected benefits and powers, it is one avenue in which community interests can be articulated. Devolution of significant powers would be enhanced since community representatives feel powerless. If the existing challenges were tacked, then one would argue that collaborative management would be a better approach to conservation.

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