



**FINAL NARRATIVE REPORT FOR THE PROJECT
PERIOD APRIL 2006 TO JULY 2009**

PROJECT TITLE: Forest Governance Learning Group-Uganda

CONVENER: Advocates Coalition for Development and Environment

FUNDING PARTNER: International Institute for Environment and Development

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1.0 Introduction

This is the end of project report for the Forest Governance Learning Group (FGLG). The Advocates Coalition for Development and Environment (ACODE) convened FGLG, starting April 2006 – July 2009, supported by the International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED). The end of project report is a concise summary of activities, outputs, achievements and impacts for the entire duration of the project. Photographs, newspaper clippings, and selected scans of project outputs are used to illustrate achievements and impacts. This report also demonstrates the governance context in which FGLG has operated, lessons that have been learnt and plans for the future.

2.0 Project objectives

The overall objective of the project was to promote good forest governance in Uganda. The specific objectives were:

- (a) To facilitate dialogue and spread learning amongst actors in the forestry sector about workable approaches to good forest governance;
- (b) To enhance justice and equitable distribution of forestry benefits and enhance local ownership and access to those resources;
- (c) To develop initiatives for combating illegalities in the forestry sector, and to enhance the integrity of the forestry resource base;
- (d) To advocate for just and equitable forestry related policies, legislation and mechanisms of implementation of those policies and legislation; and
- (e) To link Uganda with other participating countries in FGLG, share lessons and experiences.

3.0 FGLG-Uganda

FGLG-Uganda is aligned along the Uganda Forest Working Group (UFWG). Initiated in 2001, UFWG is a loose network of civil society organizations, academic and research institutions and individuals working on forestry issues. It has membership of over 500 individuals and institutions and is governed by a steering committee, of which ACODE is a member. FGLG is a sub-committee of the UFWG with a mandate of promoting good forest governance. As a member of the steering committee of the UFWG, ACODE has promoted close links with UFWG.

FGLG comprises not more than 17 members, about twelve of whom have been very active. Membership is individual based – on expertise and experience. Current membership is comprised of practitioners in civil society, agencies of government, parliament, private sector and the media and is more inclined to high-level policy advocacy. However, it was recently proposed by the group that selected district-based stakeholders be invited to its membership, with a view of tapping from local experiences.

The medium of interaction is email exchanges, small strategic meetings and group meetings. Group meetings have often been organized on a quarterly basis, and as and when need arises.

4.0 FGLG-Uganda Thematic Focus Areas

Since 2006, FGLG intervention has focused on four broad intervention areas:

- (i) Engage the macro policy framework to promote improved forest governance;
- (ii) Reduce illegal practices that degrade forest dependent livelihoods;
- (iii) Promote forestry enterprises and community management arrangements;
- (iv) Promote ownership, access rights, policy and management frameworks that support local control and increased benefits from forestry.

5.0 Activities and outputs

5.1 Macro policy framework

5.1.1 Participated in the formulation of the Environment and Natural Resources Sector Investment Plan (ENR-SIP)

The ENR-SIP is a master plan for collective development of ENRs (forestry, wetlands, fisheries, land, wildlife, meteorology and environmental management). It is a policy of government that sectoral ministries and departments are integrated in planning through a Sector-Wide Approach to Planning (SWAP). One of the underlying challenges of the ENR sector has been lack of a Sector Investment Plan (SIP), which identifies the framework of the SWAP. ACODE contributed to the ENR-SIP formulation process by providing intellectual support (as a member of the technical drafting committee) and backstopping. When the formulation process stalled, ACODE appealed to the minister responsible for environment and parliament to provide support. By engaging in the formulation process, ACODE ensured that key forestry issues were prioritized. On December 3rd 2007, the ENR-SIP was launched.

5.1.2 Influenced the Environment and Natural Resources Sector Working Group to pronounce itself on Mabira

ACODE is a member of the Environment and Natural Resources Sector Working Group (ENR-SWG), the decision making organ of the ENR sector. Among other things, the ENR-SWG coordinates sector activities but is also responsible for identifying priorities and budgeting across the sector. ACODE took advantage of its membership on this committee to influence decisions of the committee. One of the areas where the committee was influenced was pronouncing its position regarding the proposed degazettment of Mabira forest reserve. In 2007, ACODE wrote to the

committee requesting an agenda item on the proposed degazettment at the subsequent sitting of the committee. Being politically sensitive, some members of the committee never wanted to engage in this discussion. Consequently, an agenda was set and the committee reached a position dispelling the degazettment.

5.1.3 Influenced the Formulation of the National Development Plan (NDP)

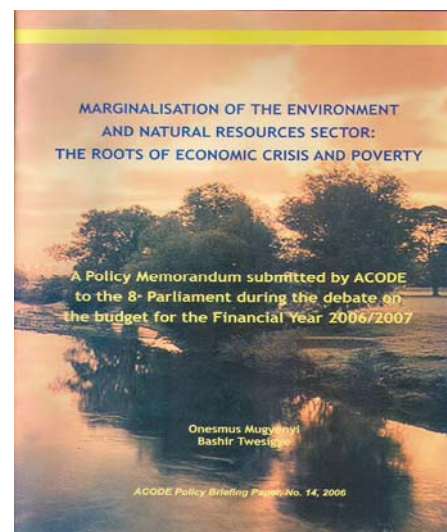
The NDP is being formulated to replace the Poverty Eradication Action Plan (PEAP), Uganda's Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) as the new macro planning framework. As a member of the steering committee that was selected to fast-track the ENR sector paper, ACODE participated in priority setting where forestry emerged prominently. Secondly, ACODE led civil society in developing a parallel ENR sector paper under the auspices of the National NGO Forum. Civil society views were consolidated into a single document that has been submitted to the National Planning Authority (NPA), which is the government agency that is coordinating NDP formulation process.

According to new guidelines issued by the NDP, forestry was selected as one of the primary growth drivers. As such, the National Planning Authority called for a separate forest sector paper that details strategies needed to promote forestry. ACODE was selected to a task-team of five people/organizations that was mandated to develop the forestry thematic paper. A final draft was prepared and submitted to the NPA. The paper articulates forest governance as one of the three core frameworks for improved forest management. The other frameworks are strengthening forest sector institutions and streamlining operations.

5.1.4 Budget advocacy for Environment and Natural Resources

One of the underlying challenges of the Environment and Natural Resources sector is a small resource envelop amidst wide mandates of environment sector institutions. Budget advocacy was identified as one of the priority areas in supporting ENR sector institutions. ACODE conducted a policy research and organized policy dialogues targeting the Ministry of Finance. One of these researches titled: Redefining Uganda's Budget Priorities: 'A Critique of the 2007 National Budget' challenged the Ministry of Finance over increased spending on public administration expenditure at the expense of key productive sectors of the economy such as Agriculture.

More so, ACODE prepared and submitted a memorandum to parliament making a case for increased budget allocations for environment and natural resources. This memorandum was extracted out of ACODE commissioned research



on budgetary flows to the environment and natural resources sector over a five year period (2002-2007). According to the then vice chairperson of the Committee on Natural Resources of Parliament, this memorandum was helpful to the committee in creating justification for increased public spending to environmental management institutions.

In addition, policy dialogues were organized to disseminate research findings. A high



The Minister of Finance, Dr. Ezra Suruma officiating at the ACODE organized breakfast policy dialogue

level policy breakfast dialogue was organized in September 2007 to disseminate the research “Redefining Uganda’s Budget Priorities”. This dialogue attracted high level participation of ministers, permanent secretaries, presidential advisers and members of parliament among many other dignitaries. Officials from the Ministry of Finance were invited to make presentations including the Minister, Dr. Ezra Suruma who officiated and Secretary to the Treasury who discussed a paper on public

administration expenditure that was presented by ACODE. The research paper on budget flows to the ENR sector was also presented. At the end of this

dialogue the Ministry of Finance pledged to revisit funding modalities.

Over 2008, with the support of the Department for International Development (DFID), and in furtherance of advocacy work on public spending and budget allocations, ACODE embarked on a rigorous analysis of public administration expenditure focusing on the legislature and executive. This work sought to generate empirical research data on wasteful spending by government. Dialogues were organized to disseminate the research findings in different parts of the country. The wisdom in this endeavor is that more resources will be saved and invested in productive sectors like agriculture and environment if government cuts costs of public administration and sustenance of a huge political patronage.

In the forestry sector, a study was done with the aim of generating information on budget flows to the District Forest Services (DFS). DFS is one of the limbs of the forest sector with the mandate of overseeing forestry activities at the district level. The others are NFA that manages the country’s core forest estate (central forest reserves) and Forest Sector Support Department (FSSD) that is responsible for sector coordination and policy. DFS is most dysfunctional due to lack of human and financial resources. This study sought to generate data on the specific limitations of

DFS. A draft research report was produced. FGLG influenced UFWG to invest in this area and the latter has responded by building capacities of forestry staff in selected districts. In addition, UFWG is monitoring big Government projects supported by the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and Africa Development Bank (ADB) to ensure that these projects deliver in building capacities of the DFS.

5.2 Tackling illegal activities that degrade livelihoods

Through out the project period, illegal forest activities manifested severally: illegal logging and harvesting of forest produce, corrupt practices, use of illegal tools, encroachments for agriculture by local community groups, state sanctioned degazettment of forest reserves, assault of NFA staff etc. Much emphasis was on state sanctioned degazettment and exposing illegal and corrupt practices.

5.2.1 State sanctioned degazettment

Tackling state sanctioned degazettment was one of the most engaging preoccupations of FGLG-Uganda throughout the project period. In the period 2005 – 2007, government proposed to give away a number of forest reserves to selected investors for agricultural use. Critical among these offers was Bugala Island Forest Reserves that were proposed to be allocated to BIDCO, the producers of palm oil and Mabira Forest Reserve to Metha Group of Companies, the producers of Sugar. FGLG undertook actions to overcome state sanctioned degazettment.

First, FGLG was influential in building a mass of CSOs, religious and cultural institutions, public interest lawyers, and the media that opposed give-away of forests in what has been termed the ‘Mabira advocacy campaign’. Working with the mentioned partners, FGLG provided intellectual leadership to the campaign by using our research to create justifications why natural forests should not be replaced for agricultural purposes. Cost benefit analyses were done for public consumption. Some of the other information that was generated includes social economic and environmental impact reviews, policy reviews and legal opinions.

Information was disseminated to the public through media and other communication channels such as flyers, sms messages, flyers, car stickers, radio and television talk shows and public demonstrations. Articles and supplements were published in the press providing information and analyses on the implications of the degazettment.





In addition, according to the cabinet memorandum, government was proposing to amend the forest law with a view of relaxing the very stringent conditions for degazettment. ACODE issued statements in the press analyzing the implications of the proposed changes in the law.

An article was written documenting the Mabira advocacy campaign. The article

sheds light on the governance issues in the proposed degazettment of a large portion of Mabira Forest Reserve and provides insights on how the environment can be used as a lens in tackling governance. This article was peer reviewed by the South African Institute for International Affairs (SAIIA) and published on the website: http://www.saiia.org.za/images/stories/pubs/sops/saia_sop_07_twesigye_20080801_en.pdf

5.2.2 Exposing illegal practices

FGLG commissioned a study on escalating illegal forest practices. Field work was done in a number of forests across the country, including Budongo, Katugo and Lendu forest reserves. The focus of the study was the administration and management of forest concessions, licenses and permits by the National Forest Authority and was aimed at identifying corrupt practices in these processes. The study documents governance issues in the different concession types – tree planting, harvesting and ecotourism concessions and provides information and evidence that is needed to inform FGLG interventions. This study was reviewed by FGLG members and the final draft was produced. ACODE is reviewing it for publication.

A memorandum was extracted from the study on concessions above, addressed to the chairperson of the Committee on Natural Resources of Parliament. The memorandum sets out key emerging forest sector challenges and calls upon parliament to investigate and take appropriate action. NFA responded to this memorandum by submitting a response to parliament clarifying positions. In addition, NFA invited FGLG to a



meeting where NFA will respond to the issues that were raised in the memorandum.

In addition to the memorandum that was submitted to parliament, another memorandum was extracted and addressed to the NFA management. The issues in the memorandum to the NFA were generated by civil society generally as a collection of civil society concerns and are intended to inform a planned meeting of FGLG and other civil society actors with the NFA, which is expected to take place at a date yet to be communicated by NFA. Similar meetings based on the same issues are being planned with the Minister of Water and Environment, the Committee on Natural Resources of Parliament and the President of Uganda.

5.3 Promotion of forestry enterprises and community management arrangements

ACODE worked with partners in civil society to promote community forestry enterprises, as a policy means for devolved management of forests. The National Forestry Policy (NFP) provides for Collaborative Forest Management (CFM) as a means for promoting community management of forests. Through the Strengthening and Empowering Civil Society for Participatory Forest Management in East Africa (EMPAFROM), a programme supported by the European Union, ACODE worked with partner civil society organizations BUCODO and CARE to promote CFM.

Our contributions to this programme included training of CFM groups in a number of areas including Budongo and Kashoya-Kitomi forests in negotiating skills. This was aimed at empowering these groups to ably negotiate with the National Forestry Authority. There were also trainings in advocacy strategies intended to create awareness about government policy processes and to build the lobbying and advocacy skills of the CFM Groups.

In addition, a national conference on CFM was organized to discuss decentralization, community involvement and benefit sharing in the context of CFM. This conference voiced community concerns on CFM agreements and called for the finalization of CFM regulations that provide for increased benefits to communities.

5.4 Ownership, access rights, policy and management frameworks that support local control and benefit from forestry.

ACODE influenced the draft National Land Policy formulation process to entrench land rights of communities. The NLP, when completed is expected to constitute the overarching national policy on all matters relating to land. As a member of the National Land Policy Working Group and the Civil society Land Policy Working Group, ACODE generated policy positions and fed them into the policy process. These include positions on radical title (allodium title), public trust doctrine, and strengthening management of public trust resources (doctrine of police powers of the state).

ACODE facilitated dialogues organized by the Ministry of Lands, Housing and Urban Development on the one hand, but also worked with partner organizations in civil society to organize advocacy forums on specific aspects of the Draft National Land Policy. One of these platforms was about the public trust doctrine and how it can be strengthened in Uganda. Proceedings of this forum were reproduced in the newspapers to reach wider readership. More forums were organized on land tenure, radical title, agricultural commercialization and tenure security, and compulsory land acquisition. Many of the views advocated for including the public trust doctrine have been considered in the draft policy document, which is still being consulted on.



6.0 Learning and Networking

Over the years of FGLG activity, the group has occasionally met to share and learn. Regular meetings of the group, were organized, at least on a quarterly basis to promote information sharing and cross learning. Information and news were shared through email exchanges. At the international level, FGLG international events were attended and contributed to. The 2006 international learning event was organized and hosted in Kampala.



Uganda and Ghana teams receiving a prize at the FGLG International Event, Bhopal, India

In addition, FGLG members have participated in a number of forest governance related events in South Africa, Cameroon, Mozambique and Kenya among other countries. There has also been cross sharing with networks such as the Lawyers

Skill Sharing and Learning Mission hosted by ILEG in Kenya and the Africa Community Rights Network host by Civic Response in Ghana and Center for Environment and Development in Cameroon.

ACODE has developed a Power tool on the role of litigation in policy advocacy. The toolkit is intended to share FGLG-Uganda experiences of public interest litigation as a tool of advocacy. It is aimed at scaling up public interest litigation in Uganda and to share experiences with resource rights campaigners elsewhere. A draft has been finalized and is undergoing review. This toolkit will be published on ACODE and FGLG websites.

E-discussions were promoted amongst FGLG members and wider forest sector stakeholders. The exchanges promoted information exchange and awareness, informed debate and also yielded useful contributions to the forest governance agenda. In addition, they have scaled up the constituency of campaigners for good forest governance. E-discussions will continue to be a means for sharing gossip and networking.

7.0 FGLG Impacts

7.1 Macro policy framework

7.1.1 Formulation of ENR SIP and Influence of ENR SWG

The Environment and Natural Resources Sector Investment Plan (ENR-SIP) was finalized and launched on the 3rd of December 2007. The SIP constitutes the ENR sector framework and basis for budget allocation. The ENR SWG was influenced in a number of areas: fast-tracking the formulation of the SIP and to pronounce itself against the proposed degazettment of Mabira Forest Reserve

7.1.2 Increased budget ceiling for ENR

The Ministry of Finance raised ENR budget ceiling from 26.03 billion in FY 2007/08 to 45.36 billion in FY 2008/09. In addition, the ministry also asked all sectors to mainstream environment and natural resources in their budget framework papers and issued guidelines on how this was to be done. This was contained in the budget call circular dated 16th November 2007.

7.1.3 Forest enterprises prioritized in the formulation of the NDP

Forestry has been identified as a central sector in the National Development Plan. In addition, environment and climate change are also identified as critical intervention areas. This has helped in profiling environment matters and increases opportunities for recognition and prioritization in the macro-economic setting and budget allocation processes.

7.2 Tackling Illegalities

7.2.1 Civic competence enhanced

The competence of the general public to demand good environmental practices was enhanced. When government proposed to giveaway Mabira forest for sugarcane growing, a cross section of the public engaged in demonstrations in disapproval of government's plans.

7.2.2 Degazettment of Forest Reserves was halted

Government halted proposals to giveaway forest reserves for agricultural investments. In the case of Mabira, the president changed his mind after a violent demonstration in the heart of the capital Kampala. Similarly, due to pressures exerted, BIDCO, the proposed investor in the Bugala island forests pulled out. In effect, both forests remain intact.

MUSEVENI BACKS OFF MABIRA
President Tells Mehta Give Away Will Hurt Ruigali Dam Dream

Proposed law may ease grabbing of forests
Cabinet wants to rationalise the functions, powers of National Forestry Authority

Govt won't give away Bugala Forest-Mutagamba
SALOME ALWENY
BALI, INDONESIA

THE Minister for Water and Environment Maria Mutagamba has said Bugala Island Forest Reserve will not be cut down to pave way for palm oil growing. "We are trying to find alternative land," Ms Mutagamba said.

Bugala Island is about 7km from the western shore of Lake Victoria. It is one of the 84 Islands that make Kalangala District. The government had wanted to give part of the forest reserves to Oil Palm Uganda Limited, a subsidiary of Bidco Uganda Limited, for palm plantation expansion.

Sunday 17th Dec 2007

7.2.3 Illegal activities exposed

Illegal activities in the forest sector were exposed and are a subject of investigation by the Parliamentary Committee on Natural Resources. Coverage in the media exposed knowledge of corrupt practices to the general public. The National Forestry Authority, as a result, expressed willingness to work with FGLG and other civil society to address the challenges in the forest sector.

7.3 Ownership of Land Resources enhanced in the draft land policy

The National Land Policy was influenced to maintain the ownership of forest resources in the people and government as trustee. This had been a source of controversy when the Ministry of Lands, Housing and Urban Development that is responsible for formulating the land policy was inclined to restoring government as the ultimate owner of forests. In addition, the draft policy provides for more stringent conditions in the management of public trust resources.

8.0 Challenges and constraints

The biggest challenge was a highly risky political terrain during activity implementation. During the Mabira campaign, some FGLG members were arrested and charged and continue to be prosecuted in courts of law.

Secondly, the National Forestry Authority has as a result faced high staff turnover. Several high ranking staff resigned citing interference. This tends to cutoff key contacts and has left NFA weaker.

The public expectations are high. ACODE has sought additional funding from other donor to meet the challenge. Co-funding was secured from DANIDA, DFID and the European Union through the EMPAFORM programme.

9.0 Plans for the future

Many of the activities that were carried out remain unconcluded, for example, the campaign against forest degazettment, macro policy processes, campaign against illegal activities. In addition, there are new interest areas of climate change mitigation and adaptation, incentives structure for private forestry, review of laws, policies and plans, monitoring and ensuring compliance with the legal and policy structure among others.

In addition, FGLG intends to spread to local governments in the future. Individuals will be selected from the local government settings to the membership of the group. In addition, civic empowering activities will be undertaken to promote civic competence.

10.0 Conclusion

The Forest Governance Learning Group has for the last three years spurred intellectual dialogue in the forest sector, promoted information sharing and networking all geared at addressing the underlying challenges of the forest sector. FGLG-Uganda is deeply indebted to the IIED for the intellectual and financial support that has enabled it evolve into an engine of knowledge creation and policy advocacy.