



The Uganda Forestry Working Group Annual Report 2019.



Photo Credit: Kayiita Jolly.

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Acknowledgment

The **Uganda Forestry Working Group (UFWG)** is grateful for the support from all the development partners and funding agencies that support their work both financially and technically. We appreciate the efforts of UFWG that have provided data and information that has been used in the compilation of this report.

Special appreciation goes to **Environmental Alert**¹, (the host for UFWG Network Secretariat) for coordinating the network. The key staffs at Environmental Alert i.e. Mr. Jolly Kayiita, Ms Ephrance Nakiyingi and Dr. Joshua Zake (Ph.D) are appreciated for the inputs in the report and guidance on the process for compilation of the report.

CARE International in Uganda through the, '*Strengthening resilience and inclusive Governance Program,*' is appreciated for the financial support (from DANIDA through Care Denmark) that enabled implementation of various activities in the forestry sector that involved active participation of the UFWG members.

¹ See **Box 1** for further information about Environmental Alert. .

1.0 Introduction

This is the annual report for the **Uganda Forestry Working Group (UFWG)**² for the year 2019. It presents the key highlights in respect to results, emerging issues (i.e. opportunities & challenges) and the future outlook 2020. In 2019 UFWG remained vibrant in the policy arena despite of the funding constraints. Interventions have remained strong on issues of Forestry governance and sustainable management of landscapes, policy reviews and networking meetings have been held. Thus, a number of advocacy interventions have been made in several fora.

The Network members have notably participated in the following strategic policy and decision making process that contribute towards sustainable environment and natural resources management and governance at different levels:

- a. *Water and Water sector annual review for the financial year 2018/19;*
- b. *Development of Forest stewardship standards;*
- c. *Development of collaborative forest management agreements (about 6 signed);*
- d. *Planting of more than 1 million tree seedlings, country-wide contributing to about 950 ha of trees to the national coverage.*

2.0 Key results from the engagements that involved the UFWG and her members 2019

a) Steering committee meetings held in 2019

In order to ensure the smooth running of the affairs of the UFWG, 4 steering committee meetings were held in the year 2019 which were aligned to monitor the activities of the Network. The steering committee provided the space for the members to provide the oversight and strategic guidance to the UFWG Secretariat in respect to implementation of the networks aspirations as stipulated in the vision and mission statements. Thus, a number of resolutions and agreed actions were generated by the steering committee, which have been rolled out for implementation by the Secretariat.

b) Development of the 10 years strategic plan for UFWG

During the period, the network has developed a new Network Strategic Plan for the period 2019-2029.

This is aligned to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), new development priorities of the country, new emerging sector issues and strategically positions the network to contribute meaningfully to development of the sector.



Figure 1: UFWG Members during consultations for the Design of the UFWG Strategic Plan.

² See **Box 1** for further information about the UFWG.

The process was highly participatory and interactive thereby provided opportunity for members and key stakeholders to give their views and inputs. The strategic plan is due for approval during the UFWG annual general meeting scheduled in March 2020.

c) UFWG Members actively engaged stakeholders on governance of environment and natural resource, demanding for transparency relating to irregularities, environmental injustices, falsification of tenure documents, connivances and doubts cast around **court rulings in favour of private developers**, with contested land titles issued forest reserves. This has consistently happened through petitions, media briefings for the cases such as:

- i. Bugoma Central Forest Reserve (NFA Vs Hoima Sugar Works and Bunyoro Kingdom);
- ii. Buto-Buvuma Central Forest Reserve (NFA Vs World War II veterans);
- iii. Mbarara Central Forest Reserve where there are independent developers;
- iv. Zoka Forest Reserve (connivances between security forces, district local government leaders);
- v. *Azelia africana* logs (traded in various parts of northern Uganda) among others.

In a bid to save Bugoma Forest, CSOs and Forest Sympathisers formed a, ‘**Save Bugoma Platforms,**’ that has been a key space for sharing information and tactics for engagement to demand leadership to reverse actions intended to decimate part of the forest for sugarcane growing. **Three petitions have been delivered to Bunyoro Kingdom, a press conference has been held and a petition submitted to His Excellency the President.**

d) Active participation of the UFWG members in the 2nd Water and Environment week

Among the activities done during the 2nd Water and Environment week, there was a “**Walk to Zoka Forest**” campaign where UFWG members actively participated in the campaign which was an iconic advocacy and awareness raising event garnering support from civic and political leadership to fight illegal harvesting and trade in forest produce (logs, timber and charcoal) in West Nile and parts of Northern Uganda. This also included members of the Walkers Association, together with Friends of Zoka, constituting **12-man team, to walk 470 kilometres in 15 days** from Kampala to Zoka Forest in Adjumani District. The event reached out to **4,410 people directly, 130,090 via social media, 5,105,000 via mass media** and drew the attention of the leadership on the need to curb illegalities in Madi and Acholi sub-regions

e) Members of the UFWG through the Standards Development Group –Uganda (SDG-Uganda)³ with support from WWF-UCO and the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) have pursued forest certification. The Roadmap for implementation of



Figure 2: Part of the team that walked 470 kilometres to Zoka in Adjumani district

Photo Credit: Friends of Zoka



Figure 3: Members of UFWG (Standards Development Group) during the Finalisation of the NFSS Roadmap Implementation. Photo credit: Arafa Kamoga

³ See **Box 1** for further information about SDG-Uganda.

the National Forest Stewardship Standard was finalised and it is only this year that the Uganda Timber Growers Association was issued with a Forest Stewardship Group Certificate, covering 3 members (with a total of approximately 1,250 hectares), in the Mubende cluster. Certification is a way of promoting “responsible forestry management” that emphasizes socially beneficial, environmentally appropriate and economically viable forest management.

e) With Support from IUCN and EA, they facilitated 4 district local governments (Lamwo, Kitgum, Pader and Agago) to hold council meetings leading to the endorsement of the forest landscape management plan for the Agoro-Agu landscape in East Acholi sub region. Endorsement of the forest landscape management plan by the 4 District Local Governments presents them with an opportunity for resource mobilisation to enhance forestry in the region.

f) Active participation of UFWG members in the annual joint sector review for Water and Environment for 2019 JSR engagements 2019 – members of UFWG actively participated in the annual Joint Sector Review for Water and Environment sub-Sector, which resulted in generation of **key issues and recommendations** as *documented and published in the ENR-CSO Position paper, Consolidated CSO annual performance report and the Water and Environment Sector performance report*. In Table 1, a summary of the key issues and recommendations by the CSOs is presented.

Table 1. Summary of Challenges and Recommendations.

Key issues	Recommendation
A) Increased investments in agro-commodities that target forested landscapes e.g. Hoima Sugar Works encroaching on Bugoma Central Forest Reserve and oil palm, targeting forests outside protected areas in Kalangala and Buvuma.	Ministry of Water and Environment (MWE)/Forest Sector Support Department (FSSD)/National Environment Management Authority (NEMA) emphasise compliance to ENR laws.
B) Court rulings in favour of illegal land titling in Bugoma and Buto-Buvuma defying the mandate of responsible bodies that protect forest reserves.	Parliamentary committee on natural resources scrutinises legal frameworks with a view of insulating protected areas against such acts (including options for cancellation of such titles, litigating those involved)
C) Reduced tree cover in the rangelands (also known as cattle corridor) due to charcoal burning.	District Forest Services pronounce affirmative action for Farmer Managed Natural Regeneration based on legal provisions through ordinances and bye-laws. The other options include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Provide alternative options for fuel wood; ii. Provide subsidies for renewable energy (hydroelectric power and gas); iii. Promote improved livestock varieties.
D) Inadequate support for promotion of Agro-forestry in agricultural and forest landscape through responsive research, innovation and technology in forestry and associated policy and program interventions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Industries and Fisheries (MAAIF) and MWE should provide the required support for promoting agro-forestry in agricultural and forest landscape through the existing policy and legislative frameworks; ii. MAAIF and MWE should address emerging issues in respect to agro-forestry in the ongoing policy reviews and programs implementation; iii. MWE, MAAIF and Private sector explore innovations and technologies to meet the available demand.

<p>E) The other recurrent concerns are</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i) Failure to curb illegal logging in northern Uganda. ii) The influx of refugees has presented stress on environment and natural resources iii) Failure to cancel land titles in forest reserves despite the plea from CSOs and commission of inquiry on land matters. iv) Inadequate funds to NFA, FSSD, DFS to implement their mandates. v) Delay in the finalisation of registration and recognition of community forests. vi) The District Land Board, sub-county chiefs (Senior Assistant Secretaries) and area land committees are not aware of their roles in ENR management, a reason for continued issuance of titles in reserves, 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Forest Sector Support Department implements the presidential ban on logging. ii. MWE and Office of the Prime Minister (OPM) rolls out refuge response plan that is environmentally sensitive. iii. MWE, FSSD, NFA and affected District Local Governments (DLGs) fast track the cancellation of titles in forest reserves and wetlands across the country. iv. CSOs support MWE in lobbying for increased funding of the sector, especially at parliamentary level. v. MWE/FSSD fast tracks the registration of community forests. vi. MWE engages Ministry of Local Government (MoLG) and Ministry of Lands, Housing and Urban Development (MoLHUD) on issuance of land titles in gazetted areas. vii. MWE/NFA needs to fast track work on demarcation of wetlands and forest reserve boundaries
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Source: Consolidated ENR-CSOs annual performance report, 2018/19.

In the same space of contribution to the *Consolidated CSO annual performance report and the Water and Environment Sector performance report*, (2018/19), UFWG members actively carried out Research in the forestry sector as indicated in **Table 2**.

Table 2: Research Undertaken by Network members.

Research/ Study/ Survey	Organization
i. Validation of views of forest adjacent communities on the Constitutional Amendment Bill No.13 of 2017 with Masindi district Councillors.	Community Development and Conservation Agency
ii. Impact of oil palm on land cover and land use in Kalangala and Buvuma islands on Lake Victoria.	ECO TRENDS
iii. Impacts and implications of oil palm on the landscape	ECO TRENDS
iv. Mapping timber dealers to inform decisions on eliminating illegal timber trade in the districts of Kampala, Mubende, Kyegegwa, Kyenjojo, Kasese, Kabarole, Hoima, Kikuube, Masindi and Kyankwanzi districts.	Anti-Corruption Coalition Uganda

g) Active participation of the UFWG members in the capacity needs assessment for the CSOs partners, networks and working groups at national level to advance evidence based policy analysis and advocacy work to increase resilience, scale up of program methodologies and application of gender transformative, humanitarian and resilience aspects relevant to the programme. This was through The Strengthening resilience and promoting inclusive governance for women and youth in vulnerable communities, a joint partnership program supported by Care International in Uganda. Findings from the Assessment showed that lobbying and advocacy came out glaringly as a big capacity gap that needed to be bridged. In a bid to bridge the gaps, about 25 UFWG members participated in the training on lobbying and advocacy organized by Environmental Alert and it is assumed that participants acquired skills in effective policy lobbying and advocacy in order to appear relevant.

h) Website and social media engagements

Throughout the year 2019, the UFWG website, Facebook, Google groups, twitter handle and all other platforms remained engaging to the stakeholders through sharing updated relevant information with members and the public at large. The reach in terms of number of people reacting to social media platforms increased in the year 2019.

3.0 Key emerging Issues (challenges & opportunities)

3.1 Challenges:

The following are some of the critical challenges faced by the UFWG:

a) Escalating degradation and destruction of ENR e.g. Uganda's current forest cover stands at 9% reducing from 24% as it was in 1999 (Sector performance report by the MWE 2018). It's not surprising as the annual forest loss is 250,000 Ha (MWE, 2016). Thus, the recent report by MWE, 2019 indicated a negligible increase of forest cover to 12.2%. In the last 25 years, we have lost 44 per cent of the wetland coverage. The annual wetland loss is 2.5%! (WMD, 2018);

b) Limited resources to effectively fund and implement the UFWG strategic plan, 2011-16 which also led to Failure to effectively operationalize UFWG regional nodes (Great Virunga Landscape and Northern Uganda).

c) Consolidating outreach and issues/thematic engagements of the UFWG at the local level to influence decisions and policy implementation through Local Governments at the local level. This requires adequate resources (both human and financial).

d) Inadequate investment in the Water and Environment sector (now at 5% of the total national budget) resulted into several National Development Plan II targets not being adequately delivered upon by the respective Ministries, Departments and Authorities. Likewise, there is dwindling funding to CSOs in the Forestry sector.

e) Balancing environmental management and development.

--*Urban forests & wetlands at risk of conversion due to pressure from industrializations and urbanization;*

--*Oil exploration and development in the Albertine rift.*

f) A large proportion of Uganda (more than 90%) still depending on biomass (using rudimentary techniques) for their energy needs. Per capita energy use still very low and hence high energy poverty.

g) Increasing influx of refugees greatly impacting on the environment and natural resources in the host communities. This is largely due to high demands for energy *i.e. fuel/charcoal, fire wood; building materials; water*. Situation is worsened because often the preparedness by host communities is inadequate.

h) Increased incidence of climate change impacts yet there is limited preparedness and weak adaptation capacity at community levels.

i) Low youth participation in ENR (forestry inclusive) engagement spaces at both local and national levels. 77% of Uganda's population is dominated by the youth under 30 years of age (UBOS, 2017). The youth organizations need to be mentored to engage in the policy making and implementation spaces at all levels.

3.2 Opportunities:

- a) The review of the UFWG Strategic Plan 2019-2029 which gives the Network an opportunity for resource mobilization.
- b) The on-going policy reviews for example the National Forest Policy (2001) and Tree Planting Act, (2003), which gives an opportunity for addressing emerging issues in the forestry sector in Uganda.
- c) The current Political Will to conserve the Environment for example, the Presidents' directives on cancellation of Tittles in Wetlands and Forest Reserves gives an opportunity for UFWG members to advance more targeted advocacy for influencing decisions and effective policy implementation for sustainable forest management, economic development and improved livelihoods.
- d) New funding opportunities, which the UFWG should scan for and position herself through structured collaboration with strategic partners to develop programs for addressing various challenges in the forestry sector in Uganda.

4.0 Future Outlook, 2020

The following are some of the key outputs which the UFWG will focus on in terms of implementation in 2020:

a) Advance Resource mobilization efforts for the UFWG – *Active Involvement of UFWG steering Committee*

- Pursue engagements with WWF-UCO for follow up engagements on legal timber trade in Uganda;
- Mapping of potential donors to support UFWG Undertakings
- Advance collaboration with other sectors, tourism, wild life, gender ...

b) Enhancing UFWG visibility:

- Compilation of annual report;
- Updating member's data base, website and social media platforms;
- Regular updates through the UFWG google group.

c) Implementation the UFWG strategic plan (2019-2029);

d) Conducting of the UFWG Annual General Meeting, during which several decisions will be made including: approval of the UFWG strategic plan, payment of membership and subscription fees, election of the UFWG steering committee;

e) Implementation of the resolutions and agreed actions of the UFWG Annual General Meeting;

f) Update data base for UFWG members – continues process

g) Supporting UFWG member's participation in the annual joint sector review and annual Joint Technical Review

About the Uganda Forestry Working Group (UFWG)

UFWG was formed in **2001** to provide a platform where the various stakeholders in forestry sector met and deliberated on and influenced developments in the sector as well as independently monitor implementation of the National Forestry Policy and National Forest Plan. The **UFWG Secretariat** is hosted by **Environmental Alert**.

Vision: The Vision of UFWG is, *'sustainably managed forestry sector contributing to improved livelihoods, national economy and ecological integrity.'*

Mission: The Mission of UFWG is, *'to promote the development of the forestry sector and stimulate all forestry stakeholders to respond appropriately to changes and challenges within the sector.'*

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About the Forestry Standards Development Group Uganda (SDG-Uganda)

The **SDG-Uganda** comprises of key forestry stakeholders including: *research and academia, civil society, private sector and government ministries, departments and authorities*. These were selected during the national consultative forum, which informed the development of the NFSS for Uganda. The stakeholders are categorized into the social, economic and environment chambers to meet the FSC requirements for stakeholder engagement. The SDG Uganda has 25 members and is certified by FSC International. Its major role was to develop the Uganda NFSS based on the FSC guidelines and principles. This is a role which was delegated to them by the UFWG during the national consultative forum on the Uganda NFSS. The SDG Uganda has a Secretariat, which is currently hosted at Environmental Alert. The role of the secretariat is to mobilize and coordinate stakeholder's participation in the formulation and implementation of the Uganda NFSS.

About Environmental Alert (EA)

EA was founded in **1988** and in the year **2018** marked **30 years** of contribution to improved livelihoods and development in Uganda through several interventions in sustainable agriculture, environment, natural resources management, water, sanitation and hygiene. EA is officially registered with the NGO Board as a Ugandan non-governmental organization, incorporated as a company limited by guarantee. EA is governed by an independent Board that is responsible for providing strategic oversight of the organization including ensuring its integrity as a voluntary service organization.

EA is a *1st prize winner of the Energy globe award for environmental sustainability-2005 under the category, earth.*

EA is a *member of the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) and a Member of The IUCN National Committee for Uganda.*

EA's vision is a, *'Resilient and dignified communities, managing their environment and natural resources sustainably.'*

EA's mission is to, *'advocate for an enabling environment, sustainable natural resources management and food security for targeted communities through empowerment and policy engagement.'*

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