

**Responsive Forest Governance Initiative (RFGI)**  
Supporting Resilient Forest Livelihoods  
through Local Representation

# **Assuming Women's Representation in Carbon Forestry Projects**

**The Nile Basin Reforestation Project No. 3 in Uganda**



**Doreen Ruta**

## Assuming Women's Representation in Carbon Forestry Projects

## **Responsive Forest Governance Initiative (RFGI) Research Programme**

The Responsive Forest Governance Initiative (RFGI) is a research and training program, focusing on environmental governance in Africa. It is jointly managed by the Council for the Development of Social Sciences Research in Africa (CODESRIA), the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) and the University of Illinois at Urbana Champaign (UIUC). It is funded by the Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA). The RFGI activities are focused on 12 countries: Burkina Faso, Cameroon, DR Congo, Ghana, Kenya, Mozambique, Nigeria, Senegal, South Africa, South Sudan, Tanzania, and Uganda. The initiative is also training young, in-country policy researchers in order to build an Africa-wide network of environmental governance analysts.

Nations worldwide have introduced decentralization reforms aspiring to make local government responsive and accountable to the needs and aspirations of citizens so as to improve equity, service delivery and resource management. Natural resources, especially forests, play an important role in these decentralizations since they provide local governments and local people with needed revenue, wealth, and subsistence. Responsive local governments can provide forest resource-dependent populations the flexibility they need to manage, adapt to and remain resilient in their changing environment. RFGI aims to enhance and help institutionalize widespread responsive and accountable local governance processes that reduce vulnerability, enhance local wellbeing, and improve forest management with a special focus on developing safeguards and guidelines to ensure fair and equitable implementation of the Reduced Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation (REDD+) and climate-adaptation interventions.

REDD+ is a global Programme for disbursing funds, primarily to pay national governments of developing countries, to reduce forest carbon emission. REDD+ will require permanent local institutions that can integrate local needs with national and international objectives. The results from RFGI Africa research will be compared with results from collaborators in Asia and South America in order to enhance RFGI comparative scope, and to broaden its geographic policy relevance.

# RFGI Working Paper Series Editors' Note

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James Murombedzi, Jesse Ribot  
and Gretchen Walters

Struggles for control over and access to nature and natural resources; struggles over land, forests, pastures and fisheries, are struggles for survival, self determination, and meaning. Natural resources are central to rural lives and livelihoods: they provide the material resources for survival, security, and freedom. To engage in the world requires assets that enable individuals, households, and communities to act in and on the world around them. The ability to accumulate assets and the ability to access government and market services depends partly on such resources along with the political-economic infrastructure – rights, recourse, representation, markets, and social services – that are the domain of government. Democracy, which both enables and requires the freedom to act, is predicated on these assets and infrastructures. Since the 1980s, African governments have been implementing local government decentralization reforms aimed at making local government more democratic by making them responsive and accountable to citizen needs and aspirations; in many places this has been done through a decentralisation of natural resource governance to local administrations. In order to be responsive to individual, household and community demands, local governments, too, need resources and decision-making powers. There must be a public domain – a set of public resources, such as forests or fisheries, which constitute this domain of democracy, the domain of decisions and services that citizens can demand of government. Natural resources, when decentralized into the domain of local authority, form an important part of the resources of individuals, households, communities and governments, making possible this move toward local democracy.

Natural resources provide local governments and people with wealth and subsistence. While nature is not the only source of rural income, the decentralization of natural resources governance is a core component of local government reform. However, governance reforms have been implemented in a context broadly characterized by an enduring crisis of the Western economic and financial systems, which in turn has stimulated privatization and liberalization in every sphere of life, including nature. The process has deprived local governments of public resources – depriving individuals and communities of a reason to engage, as a powerless government is not worth trying to influence. Privatization is depriving forest-dependent peoples of their access to formerly ‘public’ or traditionally managed resources. National governments, as well as international bodies such as the United Nations programme, titled the Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and forest Degradation (REDD), further this trend as they collaborate with private interests to promote the privatization of natural resources. The resulting enclosures threaten the wellbeing of resource-dependent populations and the viability of democratic reforms.

The specter of climate change is deepening the crisis of enclosure. A key response to climate change has been the attempt to mitigate greenhouse gas emissions through enhancing the capacity of forests in the developing world to store carbon, ostensibly for the benefit of the atmosphere as well as the communities who use these forests. UN REDD seeks to pay communities, through their national governments, to conserve their forests as carbon storage. A plus ‘+’ was added to REDD, forming REDD+, to call for improved ecosystems services, forest management, conservation, forest restoration and afforestation to enhance the capacity for carbon storage. Designed on the basis of similar payments for environmental services (PES) schemes, REDD+ has the potential to inject vast new sums of money into local resource use and governance. In the context of fragile local governments, nascent democracies and powerful private interests, such cash inflows result in the commercialization and privatization of forests and natural resources and the dispossession of local resource users. This financialization of natural resources grossly diminishes the scope for democratic natural resource governance schemes. To be sure, the implementation of REDD+ can also learn from and avoid the pitfalls experienced in these PES schemes, especially if they represent local interests in natural resource governance decision making.

The Responsive Forest Governance Initiative (RFGI) is an Africa-wide environmental-governance research and training program focusing on enabling responsive and accountable decentralization to strengthen the representation of forest-based rural people in local-government decision making. Since January

2012, the programme has carried out 33 case studies in 12 African countries, with comparative cases Nepal and Peru, to assess the conditions under which central authorities devolve forest management and use decisions to local government, and the conditions that enable local government to engage in sound, equitable and pro-poor forest management. Aimed at enabling local government to play an integrative role in rural development and natural resource management, these case studies are now being finalized and published to elicit public discourse and debate on local government and local democracy. This Working Paper series will publish the RFGI case studies as well as other comparative studies of decentralized natural resources governance in Africa and elsewhere that focus on the intersection between local democracy and natural resource management schemes. Using the concepts of institutional choice and recognition, the cases deal with a comprehensive range of issues in decentralized forest management in the context of REDD+, including the institutional choices of intervening agencies; the effects of such choices on accountability and representation; and the relationships between local government and other local institutions. The series will also include syntheses discussing the main findings of the RFGI research programme.

Based at CODESRIA, and funded by the Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA), the RFGI is a three year collaborative initiative of CODESRIA, the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign (UIUC) and the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN). RFGI working papers and documents, including the background papers, the RFGI programme description, and the RFGI Methods Handbook, can be found on line at:

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CODESRIA publishes *Africa Development*, the longest standing Africa based social science journal; *Afrika Zamani*, a journal of history; the *African Sociological Review*; the *African Journal of International Affairs*; *Africa Review of Books and the Journal of Higher Education in Africa*. The Council also co-publishes the *Africa Media Review*; *Identity, Culture and Politics: An Afro-Asian Dialogue*; *The African Anthropologist and the Afro-Arab Selections for Social Sciences*. The results of its research and other activities are also disseminated through its Working Paper Series, Green Book Series, Monograph Series, Book Series, Policy Briefs and the CODESRIA Bulletin. Select CODESRIA publications are also accessible online at [www.codesria.org](http://www.codesria.org).

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## About the Author

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# Abstract

Forest carbon projects are now a part of climate change mitigation mechanisms and local development initiatives around the world. Such projects and programmes are increasingly putting in place social safeguards as mechanisms to ensure no harm to, as well as the realization of benefits by, all the affected stakeholders. There is recognition of unequal representation of women's needs in forest decision making, and fears that this may get worse as changes in forest resource governance take place. This paper examines this proposition through a case study of the Nile Basin Reforestation Project No. 3, a World Bank-funded Bio-carbon initiative in South Western Uganda. This paper presents evidence that by choosing to work with the newly formed Collaborative Forest Management (CFM) groups as stipulated in the relevant legislation, this World Bank project had no mechanism to ensure women representation in project decision making or in addressing other gender inequalities. Implementation guidelines were gender blind, thus leaving women as powerless and vulnerable to risks associated with their pre-existing non-representation in decision making. The pressure placed on the National Forest Authority (NFA) to deliver ecological benefits along with gender-neutral interventions led to the project minimizing representation (considering it a cost to avoid), the generation of very little local economic benefits, and exacerbation of the exclusion of women in forest governance.

**Key words:** forest carbon, women, representation, institutional responsiveness, Uganda



## List of Abbreviations

CBO	Community Based Organization
CDM	Clean Development Mechanisms
CFM	Collaborative Forest Management
CFR	Central Forest Reserve
DFO	District Forest Officer
IUCN	International Union for the Conservation of Nature
LC	Local Council
LG	Local Government
NEMA	National Environment Management Authority
NFA	National Forest Authority
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
PES	Payment for Ecosystem Services
RECPA	Rwaho Environment Conservation and Protection Association
REDD+	Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Deforestation
RFGI	Responsive Forest Governance Initiative
SWAGEN	Support for Women in Agriculture and Environment
UNEP	United Nations Environment Program
UNFCCC	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change



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## Introduction

Women have a long history of engagement with forests for meeting basic needs. In forest communities, women are often identified as key forest resource managers, due to their knowledge, skills, contribution and dependency on forest resources. For this reason, feminists, conservation and development agencies have argued for the involvement of more women in environmental decision-making, to ensure efficiency and equity in benefit sharing arrangements (Agarwal 2009, Bandiaky 2012, IUCN 2011, and CIFOR 2012).

The much-publicized recent carbon-trading interventions, such as the Clean Development Mechanisms (CDM), Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and forest Degradation (REDD+)<sup>1</sup>, and other Payment for Ecosystem Services (PES) schemes<sup>2</sup> are changing the ways forests are valued, used and managed (Ribot 2008; 2011). These changes also influence how forest dependent communities benefit (Peskett 2010; Fairhead et al. 2012; German et al. 2011, 2012; Anderson and Zerriffi 2012; Rutt 2012).

The CDM was established by the Kyoto Protocol and is managed by the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)<sup>3</sup> with two matched objectives: to reduce emissions and to promote sustainable development. As a market-based mechanism, the CDM allows industrialized countries with emission reduction targets to invest in projects (energy sector, waste management, transport, agriculture and forestry) in developing countries and to use the emission reductions yielded to comply with their climate protection targets. Uganda is one of the developing countries that receive funds to invest in such projects that reduce Green House Gas (GHG) emissions while contributing to their national sustainable development goals (UNFCCC 2012)<sup>4</sup>.

The CDM's sustainable development criteria emphasises the host country's principal responsibility to formulate their own definitions of sustainable development, balancing economic fundamentals against equity and environmental integrity (Reddy 2011). In the absence of clearly stated equity and social safeguards<sup>5</sup>, CDM tends to favour the primary objective of gaining carbon credits at the expense of reducing social and economic inequality which are central to the sustainability debate. Despite this strong criticism (Boyd et al. 2004 in Olsen 2005), CDM is still seen as an opportunity for developing countries in need of funds to stimulate their development (UNFCCC 2007; Reddy 2011).

The unequal representation of women's needs in forest decision making has already been examined in different settings with fears that it will get worse as changes in forest resource governance take place (Peskett 2010; Ribot 2008, 2011). Likewise, the need to pursue equity is voiced by many stakeholders in carbon forestry discussions, including the more recently planned REDD+ programmes (Agarwal 2001; Bazaara 2006; UNDP 2010; Larson et al. 2010; Peskett et al. 2010; Schreckenberg 2011). These scholars argue that the allocation of costs, risks and benefits resulting from environmental policy or decisions among stakeholders should be justified on the basis of equality, social welfare, merit and need. However, laws and policies remain largely gender neutral and gender blind with respect to access, and ownership of land and forest resources (Bandiaky 2007, 2008, 2012; Ribot 2008, 2012). This paper builds on these observations that choices made by governments and international organizations (intervening agencies) in emerging climate change interventions are set to redefine women's participation and representation in forestry projects. This argument is situated in the *Institutional Choice and Recognition framework* developed by Ribot (2008) and Ribot, Chhatre and Lankina (2008); see also Ribot (2011). These authors point out that choosing local-level institutions often involves transferring powers to them. This recognition enables these institutions to make and enforce decisions and rules important for local accountability, democratic inclusion or local equity. It is also important in redefining how local institutions account to the people, respond to their needs and aspirations or bring a broad cross section of the population into decision making.

Accountability is defined as a relation in which one actor or group of actors is able to keep the power of another in check (Brinkerhoff 2001:2-3 cited in Ribot 2011). This is manifested in answerability or the obligation of one party to explain and justify actions to another and enforcement or the ability of one party to sanction the other when the explanations or actions are found inadequate. The ability to act or to respond (responsiveness) is the essence of a democratic institution; it is

the ability to act as others have demanded. Responsiveness requires leaders with discretionary powers to translate needs and aspirations into policy and then policy into practice (Ribot 2003, 2010). Such leaders must have significant powers and resources to make meaningful responses to people's needs. Accountability and responsiveness are key elements of democratic representation, which allows people to exert influence over institutions and their decisions that affect their lives (Pitkin 1967; Mansbridge 1996; Cornwall et al. 2005; Wangnerud 2009; Wellstead et al. 2003; Wollenberg et al. 2007; Ribot 2007, 2008, 2011).

This paper presents results from fieldwork on the effects of carbon forestry projects on women's representation in three villages in Ntungamo District, South Western Uganda. The villages neighbour the Rwoho Central Forest Reserve (CFR) where the Nile Basin Reforestation Project No. 3, a small-scale Afforestation and Reforestation (AR) CDM project, was implemented in 2006. This project is supported by the Government of Uganda through the National Forest Authority and the Bio-carbon Fund of the World Bank.

The paper shows that the local institutional partners chosen by the project and the powers devolved to local community groups under the Collaborative Forest Management (CFM) arrangements are unlikely to support just, equitable and representative social processes in the local arena. The paper investigated and answered the following questions: what is the rationale behind the powers transferred to local institutions in the management of forest resources? What is the nature of the representation of women in local institutions? What is the interaction between the different local actors in the interventions? In what ways has this affected the representation of women? And finally, what mechanisms have women employed in order to demand accountability from project leaders with respect to their needs?

The paper presents a brief literature review on women and representation and forest reforms in Uganda. It describes the case study area and the livelihood status of communities living adjacent to the project area. Section 2 presents the study methods and Section 3 the findings, and finally the conclusions in Section 4.

## **Women and Representation**

The notion of representation has been discussed by many theorists (Pitkin 1967, Mansbridge 1996; Manin et al. 1999; Cornwall et al. 2005; Wangnerud 2009; Wellstead et al. 2003; Wollenberg et al. 2007; Ribot 2007, 2008, 2011; Saward 2008). Representation is defined as 'acting in the best interest of the public' (Manin et al. 1999) or a process of making claims whether in electoral or other

contexts (Saward 2008). The debate by feminists on representation show that women's numerical strength is critical in decision making with respect to women's rights and efforts to advance their groups preferences and interests (Kabeer and Subrahmanian 1996; Goetz 1996; Ahikire 2007; Bandianky 2008). Numerical representation or 'descriptive representation' is where the individual represents a group by virtue of sharing similar characteristics such as sex, age or ethnicity or simply counting the number of women in political office (Phillips 1995; Wellstead et al. 2003; Wollenberg et al. 2007; Wangnerud 2009; Agarwal 2010).

Critics of descriptive representation argue that not only is political inclusion critical for women's representation but also substantive representation, where representatives do not necessarily have to be members of the group to formulate and implement programmes explicitly aimed at changing society in female-friendly directions (Cornwall and Goetz 2005; Kabeer and Subrahmanian 1996; Goetz 1996; Ahikire 2007; Chatterjee 2010; Bandianky 2008; Agarwal 2009). By improving descriptive and/or substantive representation in forest governance at the local community level, a full range of rural people, including women, gain more secure rights and responsibilities, and a more equitable, steady and sustainable flow of benefits including access to forest goods and services.

Women are not a homogenous group; they have differences among them such as class, age, ethnicity, cultural background and education. Bandiakya (2007, 2008) and Agarwal (2009) present evidence from Senegal, India and Nepal to show that decentralized forestry often follows the contours of existing inequalities of local social hierarchies, transforming the intended equity outcomes into reinforced inequalities. Bandiakya and Agarwal assert that, if not mandated to take affirmative actions to ensure greater gender representation, forestry interventions in local governments will often exacerbate local gender inequalities. This evidence is a condition that Shevedova (2005) described as a reflection of the status quo of women rather than a consequence of democratization.

### **Post-Independence Forest Management in Uganda**

From 1962, post-independence forest management in Uganda was entrusted to the Forest Department as the sole agency with powers to regulate the harvesting of forest products in all government forest reserves and the use of tree products on public and private land (Kigenyi 2007). From 1993, Uganda embarked on the process of decentralising delivery of services and forest management to local government agencies (Government of Uganda 1997). The objectives for decentralising forestry were to: (i) enhance the role of local government by allowing

them more developed responsibility to plan and implement forestry activities; (ii) reduce the burden on public finances by empowering local government to outsource financial resources and manage forestry activities; and (iii) encourage participation of local communities and farmers in the management of forest resources.

In subsequent legislation of the 2001 Forest Policy and the National Forest Plan of 2002, and the 2003 National Forest and Tree Planting Act (NFTPA), the central government recognised local governments and local community organisations as key players in forestry development (MWLE 2001, 2002).

Presently, forest management is the responsibility of a number of institutions, with 30 per cent of the forest estate set aside as Central Forest Reserves (CFRs) managed by the National Forestry Authority (NFA) and the Uganda Wildlife Authority (UWA). Local Forest Reserves cover about 0.03 per cent of the forest estate. These are managed by the Districts' Local Government through the District Forest Services (DFS), and 70 per cent of the forest estate is on private land. In addition, local government authorities and citizens are expected to spearhead local development planning as a mechanism for addressing local problems. The highest level of local government is the District (Local Council – LC V), then County (LC IV), the Sub County (LC III), the Parish (LC II) and the Village Council (LC I). At all levels the Councils (elected bodies) require that at least one third of the Executive Committee are women to advance their interests in local development processes<sup>6</sup>. Also, local governments have the responsibility and mandate for gender-responsive planning in their councils to address gender-related concerns in their communities. Gender responsiveness is concerned with recognizing and addressing the different needs of women and men (Local Government Act (Cap 243) 2007, Uganda Constitution (Articles 32, 33)).

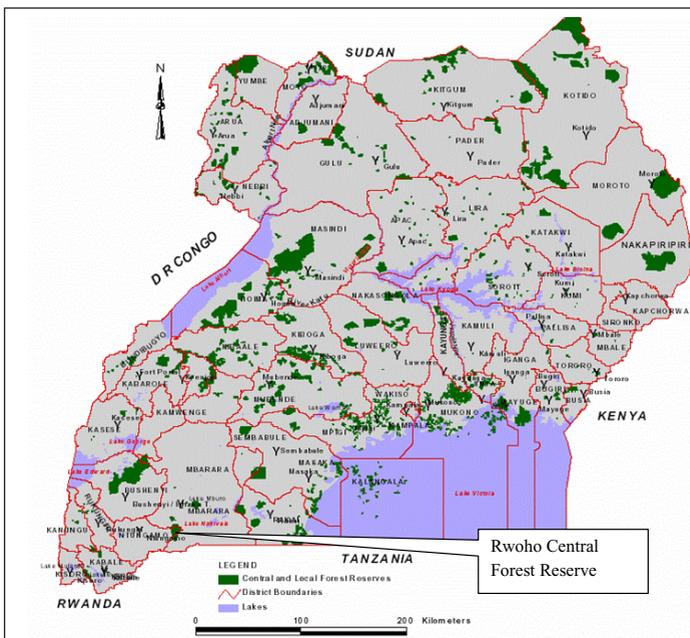
The 2001 National Forestry Policy, the 2002 National Forest Plan and the National Forest and Tree Planting (NFTP) 2003 Act stipulate gender and equity as a principle for accounting for gender differences in the use and management of forest products. The Act puts NFA under no obligation to work with the elected local government and technical staff since they fall under the general supervision of the Minister of Water and Environment with an independent status. NFA nevertheless recognizes the need for a good working relationship with the local councils since local governments are mandated to spearhead inclusive local development processes.

### Livelihood Status of Communities Neighbouring the Rwoho Central Forest Reserve (CFR)

Land holding is primarily under a customary tenure system inherited through male children. This is land owned for an unlimited period that is in perpetuity (Sec. 4(1), Land Act). It is estimated that about 80 per cent of farmers are involved in subsistence farming (community interviews, May 2012, September 2013). The crops grown are bananas, beans, sorghum, cassava, groundnuts, millet, Irish and sweet potatoes and coffee, the last of which is intercropped with other crops (observations). In addition to crops, most farmers have some livestock (mainly chicken, goats or cows) and woodlots are planted for firewood, timber and poles on the slopes where agriculture is more difficult and less productive.

Due to the few employment opportunities in the area, the forest reserve acts as an important resource base allowing the extraction of allowable resources such as dry wood or bamboo, water for animals and people, firewood for domestic use, local herbal medicines for both animals and people, grass for grazing the animals, poles for tool handles, weaving materials, soils and sand for building, mushrooms and vegetables for domestic use (National Forestry and Tree Planting Act 2003: 33 (1)).

### Map of Uganda showing the Rwoho Central Forest Reserve



Source: NFA 2006.

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## Methods

The study was undertaken between April 2012-April 2014 in Kampala, Mbarara town and Ntungamo District focusing on the Nile Basin Reforestation Project No. 3. This project is implemented with communities adjacent to the Rwoho Central Forest Reserve. The study specifically focused on the Rwoho Environment Conservation and Protection Association (RECPA), an indigenous community-based organization. Under a 20-year lease RECPA was allocated 60 hectares of forest reserve boundary land, which was a 100 m-wide band in which they were to plant trees within the framework of the Emission Reductions Purchase Agreement. The land on which the project is established is owned and managed by the National Forestry Authority (NFA) on behalf of the Government of Uganda.

Twenty-nine key informants were interviewed representing the staff of NFA at a national level and field office, local government officials from Ntungamo/ Mbarara and Isingiro Districts, opinion leaders and CFM group leaders. The choice of these respondents was purposive based on their knowledge of the carbon project and mandate to address local development problems including women's needs.

A list of RECPA members was secured from the RECPA secretariat. All eight Executive members of RECPA were interviewed and 10 Carbon group members were randomly selected from a list across the three villages (Kirungu, Rwoho and Kihanga). Using the RECPA register and village resident lists from the local council leaders, 14 RECPA members outside the carbon group were identified and randomly selected for interviews. Another 10 community members were identified outside RECPA with help of the local leaders.

To increase the depth of the information, three mixed focus group discussions (with men and women, RECPA members and non-RECPA members randomly

selected) were conducted in Kirungu Village, which is mainly occupied by the Bakiga Community; Rwoho village, which is mainly occupied by Banyankore and one with RECPA Executive members. In total, 75 people (45 male and 30 female) were interviewed and most were residents of the community. Locating the respondents did not pose any serious challenges since the researcher was resident in the project site and participated in project meetings.

Document reviews and observations were also used to supplement the data collection. Interview notes were recorded in notebooks and were subsequently read for meaning and understanding of emerging themes. Data was then coded following the issues that spoke to the research questions, identifying, categorizing, classifying and labelling the primary themes and patterns of data to determine similarities and differences. The final set of analysis involved defining themes and creating links for each theme that corresponded to the research questions for each of the respondents.

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## Findings

This section is presented following three research themes.

### **The Rationale and Powers Transferred to RECPA**

The involvement of forest resource users and adjacent communities as well as emphasis on gender considerations in designing and implementing forestry projects are all provided for under The National Forestry and Tree Planting Act 2003, the Forest Policy 2002, and CFM regulations and guidelines 2009. In this context, RECPA is one of the five CFM groups that participated in the Nile Basin reforestation project No. 3 preparation and implementation process<sup>7</sup>. Other CFM groups initiated with the commencement of the project were the Kagoto Foundation for Development Association (KAFODA), the Kanyamaizi Development Association (KADA), the Bushwere Environment and Conservation Association (BECA), and the Support for Women in Agriculture and Environment (SWAGEN) since 2012. Apart from RECPA and SWAGEN that were implementing tree-planting projects before the carbon project, the other three associations have been formed to participate in the CDM (carbon) project.

A CFM group assumes the responsibility to represent all sections of the community concerned by entering into a Collaborative Forest Management (CFM) Agreement. Interviews with some NFA officials indicate that RECPA presented an opportunity as a community-based group to reach out to the wider community at the time of the project design. By adopting collaborative forest management with RECPA, both the World Bank and NFA believed collaborative forest management with RECPA would enable sustainable harvesting of forest resources, putting controls for regulated access to the forest, address challenges of forest fires and other illegal activities and henceforth ensuring the survival of the forest.

Authority and resources transferred to RECPA were specified in the CFM Agreement. RECPA with its 250 members spread out in the three adjacent Districts was allocated degraded grasslands of the reserve boundary to be reforested with valuable timber and non-timber trees. The Association was provided with free tree seedlings, technical advice on planting, spacing, pest control and the expected payment for the carbon sequestered by the NFA upon delivery. RECPA was also expected to sensitise the forest users and other community members about the importance of the forest and on issues of avoiding wildfires, making fire lines, participating in fire fighting, and initiating and promoting the use of improved energy-saving devices. The association was also expected to establish private woodlots on-farm, handle offences and penalties, recommend licences and carry out conservation education. Furthermore, RECPA was allowed to harvest resources in the adjacent block of the natural forest reserve, while the rest of the community would seek permission from RECPA to access these resources. This recognition of RECPA enabled the members to assume a representative role for non-members in as far as accessing forest resources was concerned. However, RECPA received no financial or technical support to fulfil these responsibilities. It was not equipped with resources for reaching out to non-members and vulnerable resource users at the community level.

The fact that powers to represent community interests were transferred to RECPA implies that RECPA would protect the rights and interests of all sections of the community in addition to the interests of the National Forest Authority (NFA). However, the Bio Carbon Fund CDM Verified Emissions Reductions Purchase Agreement assigned all rights, title and interest to any emission reductions generated under and in connection with the CFM agreement to the NFA. Safeguards to work with low-income communities or poor resource community members for the potential benefits as stipulated in the CDM Project Design Document (PDD) were not reflected in the CFM Agreement signed with RECPA.

Furthermore, the relationship between RECPA and NFA is perceived by some community members as opportunistic. Despite the intention to make RECPA become a representative community institution, the agreement did not entail any mechanisms to involve different resource poor community members and non-members.

‘RECPA was given land surrounding the forest and I think they [NFA] wanted us to protect the forest from fire. We are the umbrella of the forest.’<sup>8</sup>

Sentiments from some RECPA members indicate that by allocating RECPA boundary land, the intention was more to curb illegal activities and fires destroying trees in the interior of the reserve planted by NFA than to secure community interests.

As presented in the following section, women who depend on the forest for basic household needs such as firewood and water had no representation in RECPA.

## **The Nature of Women's Representation in Recpa**

### ***Leadership in RECPA and its Effect on Women Representation***

Membership to the association is open to all community members upon payment of membership fees of 10,000 UGX (equivalent to US\$ 4) and annual subscription fees of 5,000 UGX (US\$ 2). Membership to the carbon group is based upon acquisition of shares at 200,000 UGX (US\$ 80) per share with up to six shares per member. Other constitutional requirements include attending meetings, and owning a woodlot. All these work as barriers for the majority of poor women and men in the community who may not be able to afford the requirements.

The RECPA Constitution allows an Executive committee totalling nine members. Currently, there are seven men and two women who represent both shareholders in the Carbon group, ordinary members (RECPA records 2011) and broad community interests (CFM agreement and plan 2012). Originally founded by five male tree planters in Rwoho village, the Chairperson of the Association reveals that the presence of women on the committee was largely a response to pressure from outsiders to have women representatives on the committee<sup>9</sup>. The two female members already owned commercial woodlots, a key criterion for membership in RECPA. However, given community interests in the land that was allocated to RECPA under the CFM agreement (free grazing zones, access routes to harvesting other resources), women's interests were not embraced duly in the agreement.

Views from the two female committee members indicate that they consider themselves as representatives of tree planters<sup>10</sup> without a mandate to represent women's issues per se. This understanding is backed by the argument that they did not go through an election seeking to represent the women's constituency; instead they were identified and appointed by the Chairperson of the Association. This view is however not shared by the other executive committee members, who consider the women in the committee as 'representing' women in a broad sense or that since they are women they naturally know what other women need. This rationale fits in well with the intentions of the CFM agreement to have RECPA represent community interests. The same argument was used to register women in RECPA under their husband's membership in the association. Married women thus become members with no voting powers if these are already held by their husbands. This was a common belief among RECPA leaders that household heads could represent women's interests.

As feminist scholarship already advances, household members have different preferences, resources, and responsibilities that often increase the vulnerability of particular household members but also lead to policy failures (Quisumbing 2003). To this extent, the model applied by RECPA implies that individual women's interests will be compromised by their inter household and intra household relationships. The assumption that RECPA would facilitate women's representation and increase their capacity to influence project outcomes was undermined by the choice of a membership association whose primary objectives were originally specific to tree planting and the CDM project. Appointing women in RECPA's leadership without in-built mechanisms to address gender inequalities not only satisfies outside interests, but it also gives RECPA the legitimate authority to talk about women's involvement in the project without necessarily working as champions of women's interests.

### *Community-expressed Interests in the Project Area*

Aggregated interests expressed by women during interviews and discussions indicated that they wanted the NFA to allow them to: cultivate the land in areas that were not yet planted under carbon; allow animals to graze in the reserve; obtain tree seedlings to plant their own trees including fruit trees; involve them in RECPA meetings; allow them to pick medicines, fetch water, get firewood whenever they want without having to bribe forest guards.

Men on the other hand would like to be allowed to: harvest medicine and farming tool handles (made of wood) without restrictions, use land for cultivation where trees are not yet planted, install bee hives, and harvest timber. They also wish they were provided with start-up capital for joining RECPA and provide security for planted trees, give everybody a chance to participate in the carbon project without demanding that they buy shares in RECPA, obtain jobs that pay well and pay on time in the reserve, increase community sensitization and hold meetings with the NFA. Other areas of interest included constructing roads for easy transport, fencing the forest so that wild animals do not come into the community, allowing people with trees outside RECPA to receive the carbon money, and pay carbon money monthly.

Analysis of the research data demonstrates that land for cultivation is the most important resource for women. While for some women the idea of joining RECPA was in anticipation of getting land in the reserve to grow food crops, mechanisms to influence RECPA outside the CFM commitments seemed to be absent. Requirements such as buying shares, lack of involvement in RECPA meetings, and restrictions to forest resource access act as barriers to advancing such interests. The needs expressed by men and women are livelihood concerns that would otherwise attract responsiveness from the intervening agencies in the spirit of collaborative forest management.

I can assure you: land is the most important thing. You must buy it and then you can invest in projects. Four out of ten families have very little land and rent. One acre costs 50,000 (\$ 20) per harvest and it is even not easy to find land to rent<sup>11</sup>.

Some women who had joined RECPA thought they would be allowed to dig on the forest land, when it did not work out, they donated their shares to their sons.

Women do not harvest timber, and they appreciate if NFA can get them land for cultivation. Women would think about the forest if they were allowed to dig but outside that, perceive no benefit<sup>12</sup>.

When there was burial in the village, the community would ask for timber and bury their dead. Even other things like roofing a school, Forest Department would provide the timber free of charge. NFA came with different powers. In 2010 the forest burnt for four days and the community just looked. I think the reason is because they stopped the community from cultivating food crops [in the reserve]. Even with RECPA, they stopped us from cultivating on the land they gave us and people are going to starve.<sup>13</sup>

The identified interests further reveal that representation of forest adjacent communities through RECPA can affect women more than men depending on such factors as corruption by forest guards, amounts and the number of times a resource is required such as fuel wood, water and grazing animals since women are likely to be more dependent on the forest resources on a more regular basis. Even where needs such as land for food growing are broadly similar between men and women, the cost associated with participating in RECPA activities implies that women will generally have more barriers with changing user rights, access and management of forest resources.

### **A Case of Pragmatic Responsiveness to Women's Needs**

Under pressure to safeguard the planted trees for carbon and minimize risks of fire outbreaks, illegal activities and extraction of forest resources such as charcoal burning, grazing in young planted areas, the NFA has since 2013 agreed to allow interested households to grow food crops for two seasons in the land allocated to the Rwoho Environment Conservation and the Protection Association (RECPA). The use of 'taungya', an agro-forestry intervention whereby farmers are given parcels of degraded forest reserves to produce food crops and to help re-establish and maintain timber plantations was prohibited within the area demarcated for the carbon project during the negotiation of the project. However, under this new development of allowing taungya, each interested family is allocated a 20 x 50 m plot of land to plant seasonal crops for food. Taungya ends when trees are one meter in height. As a commitment, each family provides RECPA with one day of work every seven days, does spot

weeding and constructs firebreaks. Allowing taungya is a gesture largely appreciated by all community members particularly women whose primary role includes food provisioning.

Although there was an allowance of a maximum of only one crop season provided for in the Rwoho/ Bugamba CFR Management Plan 2006-2026, this had been overlooked in the CFM negotiation and particularly for the Bakiga communities with serious land shortages and big families.

In Kagoma, Kirungu parish, the Bakiga dominated village people used to grow crops on NFA land, and NFA stopped them. We had tension and we asked for taungya because of hunger. This is where many people suffer. Some people migrate.

Recently, a young girl was arrested with stolen food and had been sent by the mother. The family sold a cow. Stealing food is a new development in the area and the first case of its kind handled by the local council One Court<sup>14</sup>.

An Executive member of RECPA also commented;

It took five years to have their [NFA] acceptance. We do not have enough land to grow food and the people are suffering. Now people are allowed to use the land. The taungya cultivation lasts about three years. People first prepare the land by clearing the bush, before planting the trees. They grow crops and that's the first season. Then they plant the trees during the second crop season. Then they grow crops two more years until the trees get a certain size<sup>15</sup>.

The NFA is also faced with a scenario where land leased to private planters can be utilized by community members to grow crops of their choice before the trees reach an agreed height. The private planters who operate outside the carbon trade framework benefit from the cheap community labour for opening up of land for planting trees. This gesture, although appreciated by all the community members, puts NFA under pressure to allow its own land to be put under taungya. With private planters, the practice of taungya is not accompanied by too many restrictions as in the plantations grown by the NFA since the community can grow varied crops and on bigger parcels of land.

The NFA has mixed feelings about taungya and community relations in their own plantations. Both men and women respondents cited a number of cases of increased bribery to forest guards, patrol men and CFM groups in the process of land allocation, demarcation and restricted access to other forest-based resources such as water, pasture and firewood. On the other hand, NFA field-based staff express misgivings about deliberate and accidental fire outbreaks that continue to destroy trees, a problem likely to compromise its agreement with the World Bank Bio-Carbon Fund to deliver carbon credits by 2026<sup>16</sup>. During the CFM meeting,

I have heard that you [CFM leaders] get money from people and you do not explain the purpose of taungya. We are already questioning whether we made a good decision to allow people to cultivate on the forest land...we cannot afford to continue losing even one tree. The condition for allowing cultivation is going to be a fire line between the NFA forest and the cultivators – at least five metres.... No sorghum, maize, potatoes, cassava are allowed in the areas where trees are planted as these crops extract and compete with the trees<sup>17</sup>.

Notwithstanding that women's primary needs of growing food in the area has been met, such remarks confirm that women's ability to rely on taungya are short term and with no legitimate basis to be negotiated in the current framework which emphasises ecological commitments other than local livelihood needs. The decisions taken by NFA appear to be responsive to women's needs, due to the drive to safeguard the trees and the need to reduce tensions between the project and community. This is especially true for officials on the ground, who are expected to account upwardly on the state of the forest cover and deliver on the project deliverables. The acceptance by NFA to allow taungya is seen as a short-term remedy to save the forest trees while the real need to increase women's capacity to provide for their families is evidently absent from the stated strategies or plans of the project.

### *The Cost of Representation and its Effect on Women*

Interviews with community residents and RECPA members show that only economically better-off individuals and heads of households in the community were able to register in the carbon project. The project offered shares at 100,000 UGX (US\$ 38.46) in 2006 and increased the amount to 200,000 UGX (US\$ 76.9) in 2011, a calculation based on similar tree-planting initiatives in the region<sup>18</sup>. RECPA members noted during the discussions that without selling shares as a way of raising capital, they would not be able to afford to plant trees or even maintain the existing ones in the allocated carbon area. As one carbon group member said, 'Carbon trade is a business. If we fail to care for the trees we will lose.'<sup>19</sup>

The acquisition of shares worked as an exclusionary mechanism for poor community members, especially for women, who lack economic power and resources. Without these resources they would not be able to secure their participation in the project or negotiate for access to corresponding forest products. As evidenced by RECPA's records, as of the end of 2011, few shareholders could afford more than one share. That is, out of the 73 members that had shares, only four had bought more than two shares, 20 had bought two shares; the majority (49) had one share each. The two women participating in the project have one share each. Not having

a share implies that one is not entitled to the carbon money when NFA pays up and when NFA allows the free harvesting of trees after 20 years, these benefits will only be shared by shareholders. The women would, in general terms, be left out.

Although RECPA proposed labour contribution as a form of payment for the shares, this mechanism failed. The distance to project sites and the nature of work involved, such as clearing thick bushes, made it hard for women to access this option. Evidence provided by Schreckenber (2011) proves that the ability to participate and the terms of participation are shaped by a number of factors, including rules of entry, social norms, perceptions, and the assets and attributes of those affected, as seems to be the case here.

In addition to raising local incomes, the Rwoho CFR Management Plan 2006-2026 and CDM social economic assessments identified the award of contracts and raising tree seedlings nursery establishment and weeding as potential sources of income for women in the project area. However, all tree seedlings are imported, raised and delivered to the community ready for planting by NFA. The NFA Field Officer also reported that only three women out of a total of 12 contractors from the neighbouring community have ventured into contract work for activities such as road maintenance within the reserve, establishment of firebreaks, slashing, thinning and pruning largely due to requirements such as pre-financing. Pre-financing requires the contractor to raise all the funds for accomplishing the contract before any payment advances are made, a requirement that further limits women's involvement in the project. Interviews with community members often showed that among the Bakiga and Banyankore, widows and single women with personal resources have rights to engage in business and independent decision-making on investment and ordinarily, married women have joint ownership of resources but with limited or no decision-making powers.

**Table 1:** List of Study Interviewees

Institution/ Individuals	Number of Interviews	Sex	
		M	F
National Forest Authority (3 National and 3 Rwoho CFR)	6	5	1
Forest Sector Support Department	1		
Uganda Coalition for Sustainable Development	2	2	
Future Dialogues	1	1	
Nsita	2	1	2
SWAGEN Coordinator	1		1
District Natural Resources Officers	3	2	1
RECPA Executive Committee	8	6	2
Sub County Chief	1	1	
Local Council Chairperson	2	2	
Parish Chief	1	1	
Women's Group leader	1		1
Church Group Leader	1		1
Women LC 3 Councillor	3		3
RECPA members in Carbon	10	5	5
RECPA Members outside Carbon project	14	7	7
Community members outside RECPA	10	5	5
Contract Holder	1		1
Fire gangers	2	2	
Rwoho CFM Group leaders	5	5	
Total Interviewees	75	45	30

### **The Nature of Interaction Between the Different Local Actors in the Intervention and its Effect on Women's Representation**

The platform for dialogue between NFA and the community is largely limited to the CFM arrangement. CFM meetings rotate between the five locations of the project area across the three Districts on a quarterly basis. Chairpersons and sometimes committee members of the CFM groups attend the meetings on the invitation of NFA. The analysis of records of three CFM review meetings held in 2012 do not indicate attendance by gender or make reference to which issues are raised by women

or men. Furthermore, the minutes were recorded in a gender-neutral manner with general recommendations. One CFM quarterly review meeting attended in January 2013 (and observed by the author) had 14 men and one female representative from the women's CFM group (SWAGEN CFM Group). She did not raise any issues during the meeting, although key issues around taungya dominated the meeting. Other issues covered illegal fees and bribes solicited by CFM leaders/forest guards while allocating plots for cultivation or allowing resource access in the reserve, mistreatment of community members by patrol men employed by CFM, NFA and private planters and control of fires.

Whereas CFM leaders/ forest guards do not have powers to charge any fees related to use of forest resources, the recognition transferred by NFA confers them with authority to make decisions that may negatively affect the lives of local communities. Similarly, interviews with CFM leaders from the five CFM groups that attended the meeting indicated that they do not make prior consultations with their group members (male or female) and that they lack the time to consult with the wider community they profess to represent. Equally, they do not have to account for the community's broader interests. By failing to carry out prior consultative meetings in the community and the negligible number of women present in the review meeting, CFM as a platform can hardly be responsive to women's needs or improve their quality of engagement with forest officials. The platform was largely considered as an information-giving arena by CFM leaders with limited potential for changing prevailing circumstances.

The level of involvement of local government authorities in forestry-related projects is reflected in the National Forestry Act 2003. Interviews with local council leaders indicated that sometimes they are invited to attend NFA initiated meetings and during mobilization activities. They participate in the signing of CFM agreements and resolving disputes between NFA and the community members. Some local leaders are members of RECPA and address local problems whenever asked to do so by the community. Such roles are reflected in this quote:

The community had started stealing the seedlings of the private planters around the forest because they are early maturing. In 2011 they asked NFA for this variety of seed and got 20,000 seedlings in December. A letter was written through the LC One chairperson and the District Forest Officer to get more seedlings. They are expecting these in the coming season August/September 2012<sup>20</sup>.

I have been posted in the Sub County for four months. I have no information about the carbon project and the potential contribution of the project to the livelihoods of the community in this area<sup>21</sup>.

## **Accountability Mechanisms Exercised by Women to Make the Intervention Responsive**

Threatening with violence, sabotage activities and refusal to attend project meetings dominated the accountability mechanisms exercised by women and men in the project area.

Shunning or demanding allowances to attend project-related meetings was a common occurrence employed by the majority of women towards forest officials and RECPA. Other mechanisms such as shaming the leaders, confronting leaders in public, making up stories and complaining to higher level authorities were also identified and used to bring issues of discontent against NFA and RECPA leaders to their attention. This was also confirmed by RECPA leaders and NFA officials who indicated that even community meetings hardly attract more than 50 people out of the expected 250 that are RECPA 'members' but also from approximately 40,000 people in the forest adjacent parish (Sub County records).

The NFA progress report of May 2012 showed that between July 2007 and February 2012, NFA lost approximately 60 ha while RECPA lost 35 ha of forest through fires. Interviews with some community and NFA respondents reveal that the main cause of fire is linked to sabotage activities for refusal to access forest resources and accidental land clearing near the forest boundary<sup>22</sup>. Forest guards/patrol men also confirm that fire incidences increase where there is perceived unfair treatment by the community such as arrests, payment of bribes and fines resulting from illegal grazing of goats, collecting firewood or water in the forest. Women and children have to go deeper in the forest at the discretion of law enforcement personnel increasing the risk of arrests at the slightest provocation such as trespass. Sometimes NFA guards come up with their own regulations, stopping women and children from going into the forest to curb the risk of causing fires. Such illegal activities including charcoal burning and uprooting or stealing tree seedlings were also reported highest in Kirungu village. In one case in Kirungu village, a forest paramilitary officer hired by NFA (locally called local defence unit officers – LDUs) arrested a boy and charged him 50,000 UGX (US\$ 20) for grazing in the forest. The women confronted him publicly and threatened him with death until he yielded and released the goats he had seized. In another case, the same official confiscated goats but after protests and seeking the mediation of the local councillor, he yielded and released the goats.

Involving local leaders is one way of seeking redress and women have at their disposal the most subtle ways of addressing their interests and getting the project leaders to respond to their needs.



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## Conclusion

Although the Rwoho Environment Conservation and Protection Association (RECPA) as a community institution had potential to exercise its representative role for community members and National Forest Authority (NFA), lack of actual authority could have contributed to an inability to play their expected role. Without technical and financial support, and with all power/authority being retained at NFA, RECPA has, to a large extent, not been able to fulfil its representative role. Its members have continued to see no difference between themselves and any other community members in as far as power, rights and benefits from forest resources are concerned. Thus, the transfer of powers has continued to be viewed as more of a theoretical consideration than a reality.

Whereas there was goodwill to involve all community members in the RECPA, lack of consciousness of the needs of women has made the representation of women difficult and almost impossible. Tagging membership to the carbon group to payment of high fees and shares, and failure to have a deliberate policy to include women in leadership without restrictions has disabled the representation of women both in RECPA in general and in its leadership. This loophole has watered down governmental efforts through its legislation to involve the community/poor in the management of forest resources. This has also led to lack of attention to the needs of women and the poor people in the forest neighbourhood, and desperation as well as continued 'bad blood' between community members and NFA.

There have been opportunities to evolve dialogue and mutual learning from different actors on general issues as well as issues that affect women. However, these opportunities were not exploited. The actors in this project including NFA, Collaborative Forest Management (CFM), community members, district officials and forest guards have each played different roles in the interventions. There is no evidence to show that there were deliberate systematic efforts to bring all these actors to dialogue on issues concerning the project. The few CFM review

meetings appear to have been more focused on general forest protection issues and not necessarily on women, a gap that negatively affects women. Thus, the interactions of the actors appear to have not caused any tangible positive impact on the issues of women.

Efforts by the community to hold their leaders and NFA accountable have been more destructive than developmental. The absence of proactive and progressive accountability mechanisms in the design of the project appear to have been responsible for the antagonism, negative attitude to attending meetings, confrontational relationships between community members with leaders, and outright negative actions such as burning parts of the forest. This limitation has led to a missed opportunity that would have provided a platform for all stakeholders to work towards mutual benefits in the use and management of the forest resources. Overall, the project design seems to have missed out on key considerations relating to gender, community needs, and cooperative and democratic governance. These are the core issues/principles that ought to be considered in future interventions that have a genuine concern to involve the community and in particular women in participating in the development and sustainable management of forest resources.

# Notes

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1. REDD+ is a market-based conservation mechanism involving the transfer of funds from developed countries to reward forest-based communities in developing countries for their conservation effort (Angelsen et al. 2009). UNFCCC is considering REDD+ as part of a portfolio of programs for a post-Kyoto, post-2012, global agreement to mitigate the impact of climate change (Corbera and Schroeder 2011).
2. PES is a voluntary transaction where a buyer purchases a well-defined ecosystem service from a service provider (individuals, community groups, companies or government) on condition that the service provided can be verified (Engel et al. 2008).
3. The UNFCCC is an international treaty concluded in 1992 with the objective of stabilising GHG concentrations in the atmosphere at a level that would prevent dangerous climate change. It also includes key universal principles such as 'polluter pays' and 'common but differentiated responsibility' on which the global climate change regime is based. A total of 194 countries are currently party to the treaty.
4. [https://cdm.unfccc.int/about/dev\\_ben/ABC\\_2012.pdf](https://cdm.unfccc.int/about/dev_ben/ABC_2012.pdf).
5. Under CDM, there are no international 'do no harm' standards or safeguard policies rather sustainable development criteria that are developed and implemented by host countries at the national level.
6. The Local Governments (Amendment) Act 2006, Section 10 (e).
7. Agreements have been signed with the Rwoho Environmental Conservation and Protection Association (RECPA) since 2003 and renewed in April 2012, the Support for Women in Agriculture and Environment (SWAGEN), the Kagoto Foundation for Development Association (KAFODA); the Kanyamaizi Development Association (KADA) and the Bushwere Environment and Conservation Association (BECA). These have signed CFM agreements since 2012. Apart from RECPA and SWAGEN that were implementing environmental projects before the carbon project, the other three associations have been formed to participate in the CDM project.
8. Interview with RECPA female member and former employee with the Forest Department.
9. Mainly requests from researchers, government officials and project visitors, according to the Chairperson of the Association.

10. These are community members who have invested in tree planting as a commercial enterprise and were behind the formation of RECPA.
11. Interview with Woman Councillor LC 111, Kirungu village.
12. Interview with Women community leader, Rwoho village.
13. Male Community member formally working with the Forest Department.
14. Interview with Local Council One Chairman, Kigoma village.
15. Interview with RECPA Executive, April 2014.
16. Overall, even the current performance of the planting in the different CFM groups indicates difficulties in meeting targets. KAFODA had planted 7.09 ha out of its 65.6 ha allocated area, SWAGEN had planted 4.69 ha out of 35.9 ha, KADA had planted 10.77 ha out of 22.7 ha, BECA had planted 1.22 out of 22 ha, and RECPA had planted 39.5 out of 60 ha. In short, communities were unlikely to meet the targets by November 2012 as set by the World Bank. By 2008, NFA expected the first payment of carbon money; however by the end of 2012 RECPA had managed to plant 45 of the 60 ha out of which 20 were burnt and the remaining 25 had not been thinned when the World Bank visited in May 2012.
17. CFM Quarterly meeting, 23 January 2013; remarks by the NFA Official.
18. Figures based on estimates of planting and maintaining the trees under similar initiatives of the Sawlog Project of the European Union and the National Forestry Authority. According to one forest official, planting a hectare of trees requires 200,000 UGX and weeding the same plot requires 150,000 UGX (US\$ 57.69) every three months until a certain height. These estimates do not include the time for supervision.
19. RECPA Carbon group male member, September 2012.
20. Interview with Acting Parish Chief Kihanga, Rwoho and Kirungu Parishes, 8 June 2012.
21. Interview with Sub County Chief Rukoni East, 6 January 2013.
22. This is an activity mainly carried out by women especially in the dry season.

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