

GENDER IN NATURAL RESOURCE GOVERNANCE AROUND L.VICTORIA BASIN- DISTRICTS OF MUKONO, JINJA, LUWERO AND MPIGI

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INTRODUCTION

Lake Victoria with a surface area of 68,800km², has a catchment area of about 284,000km² and the largest in the developing world with a shore line of approximately 30500km long and boarded by three countries: Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania with controls of 6%, 45% and 49% of the lake surface area respectively (LVFO 1999).

Uganda is in great need to development and natural resources have the potential of making significant contributions to the social economic well being of communities around lake Victoria catchment areas. Uganda has lake catchments endowed with high diversity of plant and animal life and therefore the conservation biodiversity is critical. However, the current basin resources uses and practices of basin resources are not promoting sustainable development and in many instances, conflicts in uses have arisen with displacement and denial of user rights of catchment people.

We are all aware of the common conflicts between tourism development and community villages as well as between large-scale fishing and small-scale fisher folk. Catchment resources are dwindling at an accelerated rate and the diversity of life is diminishing. The livelihood of catchment community is at great risk.

For many centuries the people around lake Victoria have lived in harmony with their environment. The forests were seen as part of communal heritage that provide food, medicine, fibre, and shelter. Today, the scenic/land scape characteristics of our natural resources make them potential tourists destination. Our natural resources are shrinking rapidly as the population and demands on resources have increased, daily agriculture, industrial logging, and fuel wood collection. This has left devastating social and ecological implications on our society. Because the man owns land, he markets the produce from land and decides how the proceeds are spent. There is little or no collective decision making regarding income from the proceeds.

Objective of the study

The study presents an evaluation of the role of gender in management and conservation of lake Victoria catchment area, with the purpose to identify common elements in the approach as well as success factors and weakness so as to get alternatives on sustainable use of water resources. The majority of people in the four Districts live and earn their livelihood in the agricultural sector, which is predominantly rural, where they are engaged in crop production, livestock and fishing.

The research result shows on gender; agriculture, environment and water, land tenure system and land policy. The study was conducted in areas of environment (sites of severe erosion, recurrent drought shared waters/resources and actual potential conflict areas: (where conflicts have occurred and are about to occur where there are tensions).

The research was carried out in participatory rural appraisal, considering the following sub-topics: -

- Gender, agriculture and environment
- Land tenure system and Land policy around the region.
- Effects of conflicts on women and men towards resource management and use.

- The growing fishing industry and its impacts on families.
- Women and indigenous knowledge around Lake Victoria catchment.

Findings: Lake Victoria catchment

It is clear that the core of environment degradation in the lake basin is lack of cooperation in gender balance and environmental issues at play.

Gender conflicts activities has resulted in increasing degradation as development activities are undertaken. This is caused by men who owns land, and where by time comes for products selling, women are not allowed to sell the products, and even harvesting like trees and do fishing. So what happens, women and children just go and harvest all/ clear-cut every plant / green cover. This results into: -

- Degredation has been caused by over-exploitation of resources for short-term benefits. This has resulted in: Land degradation, water pollution, disappearance of biodiversity, destruction of vegetation cover and deforestation.
- Poor farming practices, overstocking of livestock and inappropriate application of agricultural chemicals lead to loss of topsoil and release of nutrients and other agrochemicals into water bodies.

These have brought problems of;

- The amount of flash flows and floods has increased in resent years possibly due to destruction of soil cover, which has interfered with infiltration.
- The waters are turning more turbid with time, indicating increase in soil erosion in the catchments of this Lake basin.
- Environment management is still not being taken as a priority as it should be.

Challenges:

- Dependency syndrome and don't care attitude to the environment.
- Bad behaviour relating it to culture, that a woman is to be accessed to land but not owning it.

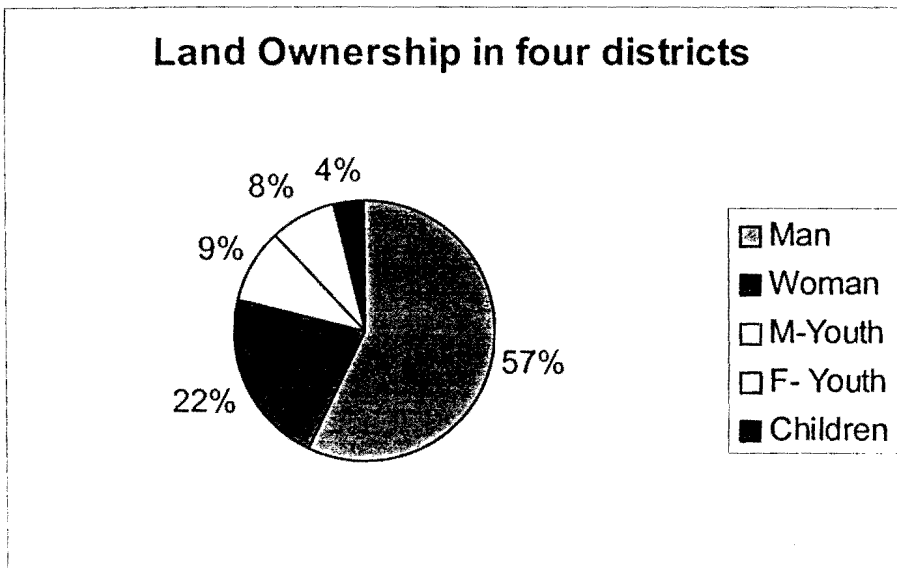
Land use

Men and women sometimes jointly decide what will be grown on the family farm, but in most cases, the man decides alone because the land is his. The man will further decide what crops are to be grown where men usually clear the land and may break up the fallow ground. The ploughing, planting and weeding, harvesting and processing is mainly done by women and children. In some few cases, men and women will work together while in others men usually go off drinking or visiting especially in the evenings. Men do the marketing of farm produce and control all the income got there of.

Land control and Decision-making

Because the man owns land, he markets the produce from land and decides how the proceeds are spent. There is little or no collective decision making regarding income from the proceeds. This kind of situation makes it difficult for women to use the land resources sustainably hence a lot of environmental degradation was noticed.

Chart:



Land and population

The magnitude of land degradation varies from one part of the District to another depending on the farming practices, population pressure, and vulnerability of the soil to erosion and general relief of the area. For Uganda, and Lake Victoria basin in particular, the key issues related to land degradation, includes escalation soil erosion, decreasing soil fertility and agrochemical pollution.

In addition, land degradation is also attributed mainly to high population growth rates, poor methods of cultivation, deforestation, bush burning and overgrazing which consequently lead to negative impacts on food production and hence food insecurity.

Forest and population

The catchment area of lake Victoria is slowly being degraded due to deforestation. The increase in human population in the riparian areas has put pressure on the forest for agricultural land, timber, firewood and habitation. Therefore, this deforestation, coupled with bad agricultural practices, has degraded the soil leading to situation along the shores into the lake. Rapid population growth, then leads to an ever-increasing territories and in response people are forced to clear-cut the forests, which consequently result into soil erosion, loss of reliable water supply and decline in agricultural production.

Fisheries and population

The population of fish in lake is gradually decreasing and the problem is to continue if the resources are not properly managed.

Siltation due to wetland and grass cover clear cut, industrial effluents are now polluting the lake, while deforestation, soil erosion, and increasing human and livestock population have all contributed to the increased nutrients loading because of changing patterns.

Wetlands and population

Wetlands, which normally filter water before entering into lake, are under stress. This is because wetlands are reclaimed for agriculture, industrial development and human settlements, while others are drained to control human disease vectors. Some are excessively harvested for making mats, baskets and chairs. And many of the wetlands have received too much pollution to the extent that they cannot perform their filtration functions effectively. In this regard pollutants normally retain by wetlands enter the lake unchecked,

this further contributing to the deterioration of lake water, and of the various uses/benefits from lake Victoria, its fish that receives the most attention.

Culture and fishing

On the landing site over 90% of the fishing equipment are predominantly owned by men. It was found out that the men and on certain times the male youth spend a lot of times fishing in the lake. They spend many days and nights out on the lake fishing and only spend some few hours at home depending on the periods of the month. Fishing having become a booming economic activity, many migrants from both the lake basin and beyond have migrated to the shores of the lake. This has increased the commercialisation of fish and neglect of the traditional cultural norms of fishing of the historical fishing communities with the lake Victoria basin.

According to the findings, the current situation is that of the migrants. Most of these migrants are men although they're few women migrants. The migrants who they blame of not having the fish and lake at heart, they only mind on economic gains.

General Environment Issues in the four Districts

DISTRICTS	JINJA	LUWERO	MPIGI	MOKONO
Problem 1	Lack of environment awareness	Lack of environment awareness	Lack of environment awareness	Lack of environment awareness
Problem 2	Poor methods of fishing	Deforestation	Wetland degradation	Deforestation
Problem 3	Lake exhaustion	Soil exhaustion	Soil exhaustion	Encroachment on forest reserves
Problem 4	Population	Charcoal burning	Lake exhaustion	Charcoal burning
Problem 5	Soil exhaustion	Poor housing	Deforestation	Population
Problem 6	Wetland degradation	Lack of fresh water	Poor housing	Soil exhaustion
Problem 7	Inadequate health facilitation	Bush burning	Bush burning	Bush burning
Problem 8	Charcoal burning	Pest and diseases	Lack of fresh water	Wetland

ENVIRONMENTAL MITIGATION MEASURES

Potential negative impacts	Mitigation measures
Environmental degradation from increased pressure on land: Poor land use practices in catchment area resulting into increasing siltation/soil erosion and changing water quality.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conducting of public education programs for community on effects of environmental damages and ways of avoiding them. • Control of agriculture inputs and cropping practices to minimise environmental problems. • Reforestation and soil conservation activities in lake shores/ basin. • Restoration of wetlands to minimise influents/ sold waste

	<p>running to the lake.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increasing of productivity or improve management of land (using of organic manure).
Over exploitation of fisheries stock and long-term degradation of the resource base.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public education programme for fisher folk on effects of damage and ways of avoiding it. • Consideration of sustainable traditional fishery practices and incorporation to modern fisheries management systems.
Social and cultural: Local economic and social customs impacts labour markets and labour availability for food production, alteration of daily living patterns and land tenure.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protect significant cultural landmarks and traditional land and resources use patterns.

Recommendations

Collaborative efforts should be put in place with relevant authorities to address the problem of catchment degradation by improving soil cover and reducing soil erosion through reforestation programmes and promotion of proper agriculture practices. The practices will include; sustainable agriculture through agro forestry and better methods of farming with emphasis on gender perspective.

- Community awareness and participation of all gender groups should be encouraged in behavior change towards environmental conservation and sharing during harvesting and selling of products.
- Environmental restoration programmes such as a forestation, soil conservation should be actively done
- Everyone should know his/her responsibility for the environment and should act accordingly.