A mapping of social protection needs and opportunities for forest-dependent communities in Uganda

For detailed information, please contact:

Qiang Ma
Forestry Officer
Forest Governance and Economics Team
Forestry Policy and Resources Division
Qiang.Ma@fao.org
fao.org/forestry/social-protection
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Ssanyu Rebecca
Development Research and Training, Uganda
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Foreword

Social protection is increasingly being adopted as a strategy for reducing poverty, food insecurity and vulnerability to shocks in developing countries. In parallel with the implementation of its five new Strategic Objectives, FAO has made social protection an important area of focus. Since 2014, the Organization has explored the topic of social protection for forest-dependent communities through a global literature review and country case studies.

This study, developed in collaboration with Development, Research and Training (DRT), investigates the poverty and vulnerability of forest-dependent communities in five districts in Uganda, analyses the diversity of their social protection needs and opportunities, and makes recommendations for action to address them. The study builds the case for the need to create awareness among policy-makers of the synergies that can and must be developed in designing and implementing programmes for improving the livelihoods of forest-dependent communities.

It is hoped this report can be a valuable contribution to countries’ efforts to understand the specific vulnerabilities of forest-dependent communities and to meet the challenges and opportunities in expanding social protection for them.

Thaís Linhares Juvenal
Team Leader, Forest Governance and Economics
Forestry Policy and Resources Division
FAO Forestry Department
Acknowledgements

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Thanks go also to Mark Menhinick for editing, Roberto Cenciarelli for design and layout, Federica Mereu and James Varah for proofreading, and Susy Tafuro for administrative support.
### List of acronyms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acronym</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CFR</td>
<td>Central Forest Reserve</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CPRC</td>
<td>Chronic Poverty Research Centre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DRT</td>
<td>Development Research and Training</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EPRC</td>
<td>Economic Policy Research Centre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FAO</td>
<td>Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MUK</td>
<td>Makerere University, Kampala</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NFA</td>
<td>National Forestry Authority</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OPM</td>
<td>Oxford Policy Management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SAGE</td>
<td>Social Assistance Grant for Empowerment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UOBDU</td>
<td>United Organization for Batwa Development in Uganda</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Executive summary

Social protection has emerged as a major mechanism for enhancing the social inclusion of poor and vulnerable groups. Since 2006, the Government of Uganda has worked to develop a coordinated approach to social protection, recognizing that vulnerable households often lacked the resources to meet basic needs or to access services and development opportunities. State and non-state actors have implemented social protection programmes such as the Social Assistance Grant for Empowerment, the Public Service Pension Scheme, the National Social Security Fund, private and community health insurance schemes, school feeding programmes and public works programmes. In general, however, access to social protection remains uneven and limited compared with the magnitude of need. Although the Government acknowledges that social protection should reach all poor and vulnerable people, some categories are left out: among these are forest-dependent communities, who do not even feature in government policy documents as a vulnerable category.

This study was conducted during 2014/15 to investigate the situation of forest-dependent communities. The qualitative approach sought to determine and analyse the diversity of social protection needs and opportunities for forest-dependent communities in five districts and make recommendations as to action to address them.

Sampling covered 29 villages and 322 households; 12 focus group discussions involved 229 men, 117 women and 23 young people; and 41 interviews with informants were carried out at the district level, with six at the national level.

Main findings

Using the Fisher (1997) typology of people–forest relationships, the study identified three categories of forest-dependent communities in Uganda: i) those who live in forests on which they depend for their livelihoods, primarily for subsistence: these include the Ik and Teuso in Kaabong, some ethnic groups in Nakasongola, and the Batwa of Kisoro before they were evicted; ii) those who live near forests but are usually involved in farming: these include non-Batwa in Kisoro and some communities in Hoima and Nakasongola; and iii) those engaged in forest-based or forest-dependent commercial activities to supplement their livelihoods: these include non-Batwa who engage in tourism, the fishing people in Nakasongola who obtain things such as oars and fuel from the forest, and charcoal burners.

The findings of the study strongly corroborate the findings of the World Bank (2003) and others such as Sunderlin et al. (2007) that people living in forested areas constitute the “poorest of the poor”. According to this study, some reasons for this include lack of policy focus on this category of poor and vulnerable people, their powerlessness – lack of political voice and ownership rights to the forest – their remoteness, self-exclusion and social exclusion, which limit their access to services, and insufficient assets, particularly when experiencing external shocks.

The Government seems to be facing a dilemma between forest conservation and provision for forest-dependent communities, who are perceived by some government officials as encroachers who should be evicted or, as stated in a focus group discussion, “criminals responsible for the destruction of forests”. This is exacerbated when communities are not provided with a suitable and sustainable alternative, as in the case of the Batwa in Kisoro: such communities feel that they have “lost ownership rights” to the forests, and they are irked to see well-placed outsiders protected to enable them to harvest forests. The reaction, according to a finding of this study, can be that members of vulnerable communities engage in “retaliatory exploitation” of the forest.

The different land tenure systems operating in Uganda aggravate the problem for the communities in or around privately owned forests and constrain the Government in that it cannot handle the issue conclusively without infringing the law and the rights of private landowners.

Two types of behaviour emerge from this study: i) communities who recognize that their livelihoods and culture depend on the existence of the forest; they have developed a social pact
not to destroy the forest and in fact to conserve it, which they do by pruning trees rather than felling them, and if they must fell trees they do so in such a way that the stump can sprout; and ii) groups characterized by the “bafuruki”\(^1\) immigrant syndrome, who do not have any such socio-cultural attachment to the forest but see it as an opportunity to increase their land-holdings; they tend to destroy the forests wantonly.

**Recommendations**

1. Although forest-dependent communities are not a homogenous group, the Government needs to recognize them as a special category of vulnerable people and harmonize its policies accordingly. In particular, the forestry and social protection sub-sectors need to collaborate on interventions that combine enhancement of conservation and social development. The Government therefore should ensure that provisions for social protection and other public programs are adjusted to include forest-dependent communities.

2. Given that most forest-dependent communities are engaged in subsistence agriculture, agricultural policy and programming should focus on developing technologies that are relevant to forest habitats.

3. Training in and support for alternative sources of livelihoods are needed for communities that depended solely on forests before eviction so that they are not destitute in the “life outside the forest”; and communities that face extreme weather need advice on how to adapt to alternative livelihoods.

4. The Farmer Managed Natural Regeneration model, currently spearheaded by World Vision, needs to be replicated in all forest-dependent communities to conserve the natural habitat and limit the social and economic effects of climate change. The promotion of local tree species and improved food crops, especially in the semi-arid areas, is imperative.

5. The Government needs to address the issue of evictions without a proper resettlement process. In particular, it needs to find suitable land to resettle the Batwa in Kisoro and the Baluuri in Nakasongola, who are threatened with eviction. Without proper resettlements, these communities will remain perpetually poor.

6. Access rights for communities adjacent to forests need to be recognized in full, and the animosity between communities and National Forestry Authority officials addressed. This includes, among other interventions, the need to clarify the Collaborative Forestry Management guidelines, and respect conservation agreements with communities. Furthermore, approaches to conservation such as those implemented by Eco Trust, which are based on “payment for ecosystem services”, should be replicated.

7. The question whether social services should be established in communities living on gazetted forestland needs to be resolved, and not simply dismissed by the authorities. The illegality of the settlements should not be used to determine the level of services delivered to the communities, particularly if the Government has not provided them with a suitable alternative.

8. The lack of connection or collaboration between the sectors that affect forest-dependent communities and the social protection sub-sector needs to be addressed; it is necessary to create awareness among policy-makers as to the synergies that need to be developed in the design and implementation of programs for the improvement of the livelihoods of forest-dependent communities.

9. More studies are needed to enhance understanding of forest-dependent communities and determine how to incorporate them into government policies and programs that must be protective, preventive, positive and transformational.

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\(^1\) Local term for foreigners migrating to communities in western Uganda.
1. Introduction

1.1 Background

Social protection has emerged as a major mechanism for enhancing the social inclusion of poor and vulnerable groups. The Government of Uganda has been working since 2006 to develop a coordinated approach to social protection, recognizing that most vulnerable households lack the resources to meet basic needs or to access services and development opportunities. Ugandan and non-state actors implement various social protection programmes, notably the Expanding Social Protection Programme, a five-year pilot in 15 districts that ended in December 2015; a five-year extension has been approved and is under way. Others include the public service pension scheme, the national social security fund, several organization-based provident schemes, private and community health insurance schemes, school feeding programmes, social care services and public works programmes.

In general, however, access to social protection is uneven and limited compared with the magnitude of need. Many poor and vulnerable people are not reached by these services, and although the Government acknowledges that social protection is supposed to target poor and vulnerable people, some categories are not recognized. In particular, forest-dependent communities are not categorized as vulnerable in the official literature: the State of Uganda Population Report 2013, for example, whose theme is “addressing the needs of special interest groups” does not list or discuss forest-dependent communities as a category that would attract the Government’s special social-transformation interventions; it refers only to populations residing in historically deprived rural regions and communities experiencing historical social discrimination [Uganda Population Secretariat and the United Nations Population Fund, 2013]. The report Poverty, Inequality and Vulnerability [Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development, 2012] is silent with regard to forest-dependent or similar communities vulnerable to chronic poverty.

On the other hand, the first report on chronic poverty in Uganda published by the Chronic Poverty Research Centre and Development Research and Training in 2005 identified isolated communities such as remote villages and the occupants of agriculturally and ecologically marginal areas as highly vulnerable to chronic poverty [Development Research and Training [DRT] and Chronic Poverty Research Centre [CPRC], 2005]. According to the second report published by DRT and the CPRC in 2013, the situation had changed marginally: the vulnerability of such communities manifested itself in persistent lack of and limited access to socio-economic services and such communities perceived themselves as poor because they had limited opportunities to enhance livelihoods. Stigma, exclusion and discrimination against people living in remote and agro-ecologically difficult areas also affect their ability to meet their basic needs [DRT and CPRC, 2013].

1.2 Objectives

This study investigated rural development and poverty reduction in Uganda, with specific attention to forest-dependent communities. The aim was to enhance understanding of poverty and vulnerability, and hence poverty reduction and sustainable rural development, with an emphasis on social protection. The objectives were to:

1. gain understanding of poverty from the perspective of poor forest-dependent communities in Uganda with a view to informing pro-poor rural-development programmes;

2. In addition to the statutory provident fund, the National Social Security Fund and several NGOs operate “motivational” provident funds for their staff.
2. gain insight into the need for, access to and availability of social protection at the community level with a view to informing the development of social protection programmes in the context of sustainable rural development; and

3. engage the Government in dialogue with poor communities to increase understanding of poverty and vulnerability, and hence poverty reduction and sustainable rural development requirements, with an emphasis on social protection.

1.3 Method

The study used a qualitative approach. A review of the literature and field assessments using qualitative tools and data analysis was used to analyse the diversity of the social protection needs of forest-dependent communities in Uganda and the related opportunities.

Literature review

The documents reviewed included national, regional and international literature on forestry in general, forest tenure and the livelihoods of forest-dependent communities in particular; the team found that literature on this subject relating to Uganda was scarce. The review focused on poverty, vulnerability, coping mechanisms and social protection interventions for forest-dependent communities with a view to identifying gaps in the documented social protection interventions.

At the national level, the team analysed government policy documents such as the National Forestry Policy, the National Agriculture Policy, the programme document Farm Income Enhancement and Forest Conservation Project, the National Forestry and Tree Planting Act 8/2003 and the draft National Social Protection Policy Framework.

The team determined whether the policies had a focus on forest-dependent communities and whether their provisions were interconnected in terms of objectives, targeting and cross-sectoral arrangements.

Fieldwork

The research team conducted consultations at the national level and fieldwork in five districts as described below.

Sampling

At the national level, the study consulted the following policy actors: the National Forestry Authority (NFA), the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development, the Ministry of Water and Environment and the Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Industries and Fisheries with a view to finding out what policies and programmes were in place to address the livelihoods and wellbeing of forest-dependent communities.

At the sub-national level, five districts were selected following the review of literature and mapping of NFA forests. Discussions were held with non-governmental actors with experience of working with forest communities and other minorities. The areas involved were Kaabong in Karamoja sub-region, Hoima in Western region, Kisoro in the extreme south-west, Nakasongola in Central region and Kalangala, an archipelago on Lake Victoria. These districts were known to have natural forest cover and significant forest-dependent populations. Time and resource constraints meant that West Nile and Northern regions were not studied.

At the district level, the communities were selected on the advice of district forestry officers. At the village level parish chiefs, the lowest level of local civil servants, and village chairpersons facilitated the identification of participants for the focus group discussions.

Interviews

The study involved 41 informants at the district level and six at the national level. These included forestry officers, community development officers, production officers, staff of the Food and
Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) in Nakasongola and Kaabong districts, sub-county chiefs, parish chiefs, staff of non-governmental organizations and civil-society organizations, health workers, teachers, and other stakeholders.

Focus group discussions
The study involved 12 focus groups totalling 229 men and 117 women and interacted with four youth groups totalling 23 participants. It reached participants from 29 villages and 322 households. The number of participants in a focus group depended on the population of the forest-dependent community, their living arrangements, their willingness to talk to researchers and the level of scepticism about the intentions of people wanting to talk to villagers about the forest. Separate discussions were held with men, women and young people. In one case in Kaabong district, the study spoke with a focus group of service providers, mostly community volunteers, and in one instance in Nakasongola district community members refused to split up so a community meeting was held. The study interacted with a youth group in Nakasongola and two in Hoima district that had benefited from the Youth Livelihood Fund, and a youth group in Kaabong that is starting a tree planting project.

Life History Interviews
Interviews were conducted with people who had lived in the study communities long enough to understand how things have changed over time. They helped the team to understand how changes have affected the social and economic wellbeing of individuals and communities and to study their coping capacities.

Triangulation
During the interviews, triangulation was used to ensure consistency of information.

1.4 Data analysis
The data from the field were transcribed and sorted; similar information was put together to generate themes linked to the aims described in objectives 1 and 2: poverty and vulnerability and access to social protection, and how they affect forest-dependent communities. The analysis explored the meaning of these themes in relation to the experiences of individuals, households and communities in the study areas.

3 Living arrangements in Karamoja, where Kaabong district is located, are communal and it was difficult to select a few people for a meeting, others would join in or leave at will.
This section provides an overview of forest cover and tenure in Uganda, describes the study sites and clarifies the concept of forest dependence as used in the study.

2.1 Forest cover and tenure in Uganda

In the context of this study, forests include all areas covered by woodland, whether public or privately owned. By this definition, forests and woodlands cover 24 percent of the total land area in Uganda. Of this, 17 percent consists of Central Forest Reserve (CFR), 18 percent is national parks and wildlife reserves and 0.03 percent is forest reserves managed by local governments. The remaining 64 percent is on private and communal lands and hence managed by private and local community forest owners (Ministry of Water and Environment, 2013; Winterbottom and Eilu, 2006). In the various ownership categories, forest owners and/or dependants have varying rights and responsibilities that have a bearing on the vulnerabilities of forest-dependent communities (see Table 1).

Table 1. Land Tenure Categories and Responsibilities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Owner</th>
<th>Owner's rights and responsibilities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Private           | Customary    | Individual – Ankole, Bugisu, Kigezi, Busoga etc.  
|                   |              | Clans, families – Teso, Acholi, Lango etc.    | Vested in individuals, clans or families who own trees and regulate the use of tree resources; use subject to local and national policies. |
|                   | Mailo        | Landowner; in Buganda, parts of Bunyoro and Alurland | Property of landowner, who has absolute rights to tree and forest resources. Tenants lack security of tenure over tree and forest resources; use subject to local and national policies. |
|                   | Freehold     | Private landowner – individual or institution | Individual or institution has absolute rights to tree and forest resources under government regulations; use subject to local and national policies. |
|                   | Leasehold    | Lessee owns land under contract with owner   | Contract vests rights to tree and forest resources in the lessee for its duration; use subject to local and national policies. |
| State             | Central forest reserves | NFA                                         | Property is held in trust for Ugandans. Planning and management by the responsible body subject to local and national policies. |
|                   | Local governments | Local government                           |                                                                                                      |
|                   | National parks and wildlife reserves | UWA                                         |                                                                                                      |

Source: Kigenyi, [undated], p.5.
2.2 Study districts

The study was conducted in five districts known to have or have had forest cover. The communities selected were as far as possible those living inside or adjacent to forests, and where it was probable that the populations derived all or some of their livelihood from forests.

Kalangala

This district is made up of 84 scattered islands in Lake Victoria with a total area of 9 066.8 km², of which 432.1 km² – 4.8 percent – is land. Mean annual rainfall ranges from 1 125 mm to 2 250 mm and mean monthly rainfall is 140 mm, with peaks in March–May and the October–November rainy season. The vegetation is predominantly medium moist evergreen forests. The district has 34 central forests reserves controlled by the NFA. Total forest cover is 144.9 km², of which 61.1 percent is CFR, 22.1 percent are private forests and 16.8 percent degraded forest cover. The study was undertaken in the villages of Ssemawundo in Bufumira sub-county and Kisaba in Kyamuswa sub-county, where communities live near forests.

Kaabong

Kaabong district in north-eastern Uganda borders Kenya and Sudan. It lies at altitudes between 100 m and 2 500 m above sea level. The main vegetation includes forests at high altitudes, savannah woodland, semi-evergreen thickets, deciduous thickets, riparian habitats and grass steppes. Patches of forest cover are found on the hills and mountains of Murongole, Zulia and Timu. The district has 16 natural forests and seven forest plantations. Forest and woodland cover 2 324 km² – 18 percent – of the district. The study was carried out in three communities of Kaabong town council and Kalapata sub-county and focused on the forests of Timu, Murongole and Kaabong.

Hoima

Hoima district is in the mid-western Bunyoro sub-region. In the west, where it borders the Democratic Republic of the Congo, it is occupied by Lake Albert. Protected forest reserves and wildlife conservation areas account for 758 km² – 20.9 percent – of the district, all of which are under public land tenure with access restricted to community members. Bunyoro sub-region receives between 1 000 mm and 1 500 mm of rain per annum with peaks in March–May and September–December. For this study two sub-counties of Kyangwali and Kabwooya were selected because they contained most of the forested areas, including Bugoma CFR and a number of smaller forests, and forest-adjacent communities.

Nakasongola

Nakasongola district, located in the north-western part of Central region, covers 3 424 km², of which swamps, wetlands and Lake Kyoga occupy 321.6 km². One of Uganda’s driest districts, it lies in the cattle corridor. Migrants from neighbouring districts have occupied CFRs and other open areas. Woodlands comprise up to 80 percent of vegetation cover. The district has four CFRs and areas of forest on private land with absentee landlords. The study was carried out in Wabinyonyi and Lwampanga sub-counties, which have communities living in and around the Kasagala and Wabis-Wajala CFRs. The district has four land tenure systems: leasehold – 3 percent, mailo land – 41 percent, freehold – 9 percent and customary – 47 percent. Land tenure has significant implications for the livelihoods of forest-dependent communities.

Kisoro

Kisoro district in the south-western part of the country covers an area of 729.2 km², of which forests cover 44 km². It borders the Democratic Republic of Congo to the west and the Republic of Rwanda to the south. The district has two rainy seasons in September–December and March–May. Kisoro district lies at 1 900 m above sea level. Its three vegetation zones are forests, wetlands and grasslands. Kisoro’s three major tropical natural forests, which lie at 1 300 m above sea level, are Bwindi Impenetrable National Park, Mgahinga Gorilla National Park and Echuya CFR. Areas

See: http://www.wdl.org/en/item/7768/
surrounding Mgahinga forest reserve are densely populated because people believe that children become their social security later in life. The three sub-counties of Muramba, Kirundo and Kanaba were studied, because they had the largest populations close to the three CFRs.

Map showing the study districts

2.3 The concept of forest dependence

Different actors understand the concept of forest dependence in different ways. Byron and Arnold (1997) argue that forest dependence can best be described on the basis of the different uses people make of forests; Fisher (1997, pp. 4–5) defines the relationships people have with forests as follows:

1. People who live inside forests, and are heavily dependent on forests for their livelihood primarily on a subsistence basis. They are often indigenous peoples or people from minority ethnic groups, and are generally outside both the political and economic mainstream.

2. People who live near forests, are usually involved in crop and/or livestock farming outside the forest. They regularly use forest products (timber, fuel wood, bush foods, and medicinal plants) partly for their own subsistence purposes and partly for income generation.

3. People engaged in such commercial activities that are either forest-based or depend significantly on forest resources.

This study adopted the Fisher (1997) typology and identified three categories of communities as shown in Table 2.
Table 2. Categories of Communities in the Fisher Typology

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Typology</th>
<th>Community</th>
<th>District</th>
<th>Primary Livelihood</th>
<th>Secondary Livelihood</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>People who live inside forests</td>
<td>The ethnic group living inside Timu forest</td>
<td>Kaabong</td>
<td>Agrarian farming inside the forest</td>
<td>Rudimentary mining and trading in gold</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Teuso ethnic group in Murongole CFR</td>
<td>Kaabong</td>
<td>Agrarian farming inside and outside the forest</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Various ethnic groups in the Wabisi-Wajala and Kasagala CFRs</td>
<td>Nakasongola</td>
<td>Cattle keeping and agrarian farming inside the forests</td>
<td>Trade in firewood and charcoal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communities that live near forests</td>
<td>The Batwa ethnic group and non-Batwa communities</td>
<td>Kisoro and surrounding districts</td>
<td>Agriculture and animal husbandry</td>
<td>Trade in small forest products such as sisal, herbs, wild vegetables and fruits.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Communities adjacent to Bugoma CFR and nearby smaller forests</td>
<td>Hoima</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Communities adjacent to Bugga, Kannuna, Katozi, Ddaba, Bugala, Lunabala and Lulimbiri CFRs</td>
<td>Kalangala</td>
<td>Fishing</td>
<td>Domestic use of forest resources such as wood for boats and makeshift shelters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People who depend on forests for commercial purposes only</td>
<td>Some Batwa who have failed to settle after eviction from Bwindi forest</td>
<td>Kisoro</td>
<td>Porters, Casual workers, Trade in small items made from forest resources</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban dwellers</td>
<td>Hoima</td>
<td>Nakasongola</td>
<td>Charcoal burning, Wood sales, Building, Small-scale carpentry</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Kalangala</td>
<td>Kalangala</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
For communities surrounding forests that have been gazetted over a long period such as the Bugoma in Hoima district and the Budongo in neighbouring Masindi district, the notion of forest dependence is belied. They believe that there is no longer a community in Hoima district that is entirely dependent on forests. This is because the forests have been gazetted for a long time and community access to forest resources is limited or forbidden. According to the respondents in these communities, people obtain less than 1 percent of their livelihood requirements from forest resources.
3. Study findings

3.1 Forest dependence

3.1.1 Forest income and livelihoods

Forests are becoming increasingly important as a source of livelihoods for a large number of people in the informal sector. Forestry forms a large part of the informal economy, and the forest sector employs close to 1 million people (Ministry of Water and Environment, 2013). Byron and Arnold (1997) state that people who depend on forests for their livelihoods range from those who choose to generate much of their livelihoods from forests because it is an attractive option to those for whom forest dependency is a livelihood of last resort. This study identified the forest-dependent livelihoods set out below.

**Farming activities within forests**

This type of livelihood includes people who live in forests and have gardens, cattle herders who have settled and obtained grazing lands in forests and forest reserves, people who farm on the outskirts of forests and those in communities adjacent to forests.

**Cultivators and gatherers inside forests**

This category includes the Ik ethnic group in Timu forest in Kaabong district, and the communities in Wabisi-Wajala forest in Nakasongola district, for whom forests are the main source of livelihoods. They grow crops such as cassava, maize, millet and other drought-resistant crops primarily for domestic consumption. During the dry season they gather fruits, vegetables and honey for domestic use.

The Ik recognize that their livelihoods and culture depend on the existence of the forest. According to men and women respondents in Timu forest, they have a social pact to conserve the forest and keep it from destruction. To do this they do not fell trees but prune them during the rainy season to reduce the shade that would affect their crops. If they have to fell any trees, they do so in such a way that the stump can sprout.

The people in Wabisi-Wajala on the other hand have cleared large areas of the forest to obtain land for agriculture and shelters. They do not have any socio-cultural attitudes towards the forest: the women respondents in Wabisi-Wajala forest said:

“When we came here, there was a thick natural forest everywhere. We in fact feared to go inside the forest, as there were wild animals as well. We began by cutting trees from the edges of the forest to create land for shelter and agriculture, and obtain wood for construction. As time went by and families grew, we gradually penetrated the forest. People simply acquired areas of land they could clear and cultivate. Over time, we began to realise that the forest cover was almost gone.”

[Women in FGD in Wabisi-Wajala Central Forest Reserve].

The forest guards in Kaabong forest and their extended families engage in shifting crop cultivation, with permission from town council offices. They work in areas of cleared forest, with long periods of fallow, and supplement cultivation with the income they obtain from employment as forest guards.

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5 These are the people who migrated from Lango sub-region north of Nakasongola district. They claim to have been allocated this forestland by the parish chief’s office in the early 1990s, but the office claimed the forest was given to the people with permission from the Ministry of Rehabilitation.

6 Kaabong forest is a commercial forest owned by the Kaabong town council.
Cattle herders inside forests
Cattle keepers inside forests are primarily communities in Kasagala CFR in Nakasongola district. Having migrated in search of pasture and water for their animals – they generally keep large herds of cattle on a free-range system – these people have cleared large areas of forest for shelter and grazing lands, many of which are now fenced off. Even though they have fenced off some areas, these people also graze anywhere in the forest and beyond, destroying gardens and any green cover in the process. They also engage in cultivation on a small scale, mostly for domestic consumption.

Farming communities outside but drawing upon forests
These include: i) non-Batwa communities on the outskirts of Bwindi, Mgahinga and Echuya forests in Kisoro district; ii) the Teuso people living on the peaks of mount Murongole in Kaabong district surrounding Murongole CFR; iii) communities adjacent to Bugoma CFR and a number of smaller forests in Hoima district; and iv) a small proportion of women in Kalangala. These communities engage mainly in crop farming for domestic consumption; some, especially in Hoima and Kisoro, keep goats, sheep, pigs and poultry for sale.

The agriculture of the communities in Kisoro and Kaabong is on a small scale on mountainous terrain that is difficult to farm; in Kisoro there is major fragmentation as land is divided among family members. The communities draw on forest resources to supplement their household needs during the dry season: they keep bees in the forests, and the communities adjacent to Murongole forest in Kaabong mine and sell gold.

In Hoima, the people are mostly bafuruki [immigrants] from other parts of Uganda, especially Kigezi and West Nile. They have encroached on the forests and reclaimed large areas where they grow maize, rice and tobacco for domestic consumption and commercial purposes. Hoima district is in fact the largest tobacco-producing part of Uganda. To supplement their livelihoods these people collect mahogany seeds from the forests for sale and planting elsewhere. In Kalangala, only 12 percent of forest-dependent communities, mostly women, engage in in shifting cultivation by illegally encroaching on forest areas.

For these communities, inter-dependence with forest ecosystems is therefore a matter of people getting supplementary livelihoods from the forests rather than depending on them completely, and they also obtain some items such as wild vegetables and fruits for subsistence, herbs for medicine, wood for temporary housing needs, and firewood. Two reasons for this are that the forest cover itself has been shrinking over time, and that laws, regulations and vigilance for conservation have become more stringent.

Commercial activities
People in this category do not live in the forests: most live in communities within 10 km of them. Donovan [2006] reported that this category of people engage in production of goods such as timber and non-timber forest products – nurseries, beekeeping, fruit tree growing, woodlots and brickmaking for example – and provide recreational services and labour.

Petty trade
This was most evident in Kisoro and Hoima. In Kisoro, forests remain an important facilitator of livelihoods despite the eviction of the Batwa and restriction of access for other community members. People can obtain bamboo poles, sticks for climbing beans, honey and herbs, which they may sell to tourists. In Hoima, they mostly trade in handicraft items made out of forest materials.

Tourism
This is most common among Kisoro communities because of the Bwindi Impenetrable National Park and the Mgahinga Gorilla National Park, which attract large numbers of tourists. Several community members act as tour guides; others sell handicraft items and provide camping sites for tourists. The hotel business near the parks has grown significantly and provides job opportunities for many local people. Men in Kalangala may also act as tour guides as their primary livelihood.
Labour
In Kisoro district, home to the Batwa people evicted from the Bwindi and Mgahinga forests, the main occupation is wage labour, mainly as porters and garden labourers; some are employed by the national game parks as rangers and guides; others work in the leisure and hospitality industry. The Batwa also earn from their unique music, dance and drama. In the case of Kalangala, outsiders come to the island to work in the sawpits.

Fishing
In Kalangala district, the primary occupation of the people is fishing in Lake Victoria; in Nakasongola district, many people fish in Lake Kyoga as a supplementary economic activity. The fishing communities in both districts also extract forest resources, particularly wood for boats, temporary accommodation and market stalls, and for fuel.

Charcoal burning
This is common in Nakasongola district. In addition to clearing forests for farming, grazing and accommodation, many people cut the remaining small trees and shrubs to burn charcoal. According to respondents in Kasagala forest, people come from other parts of the district or from elsewhere in the country to burn charcoal.

“Not everyone who burns charcoal in the forest is a native. There are many people we do not know who periodically come and enter the forest. They cut trees and burn charcoal for about two or three months. When they have made enough charcoal, we see trucks coming to take away the charcoal, and the people leave. We sometimes see these people but we often do not. They are mostly hidden in the forest and elude strangers because they are in the forest illegally and are being hunted down by NFA officials.”
[Men in an FGD in Kasagala CFR]

3.1.2 Understanding poverty and vulnerability
An analysis of poverty and vulnerability is important because understanding social protection depends on an understanding of the poverty, risks and vulnerabilities affecting people in specific settings. This contributes to the design of social protection policies and programmes with a view to achieving better outcomes (Holmes, Jones and ODI, 2009).

There is a general lack of data on poverty levels among forest-dependent people. The World Bank, however, observes that a large share of people suffering from extreme poverty live on
“fragile” land such as arid zones, slopes, poor soils and forest ecosystems, and that 18.5 percent of the 1.3 billion people living on environmentally fragile lands live in forested areas [World Bank, 2003]. A 2007 analysis of poverty and forests in seven countries including Uganda found that people living in areas with dense forest cover tended to be characterized by high rates of poverty and constituted the “poorest of the poor”. The study estimated that 3 percent of Uganda’s poor live in areas characterized as high forests [Sunderlin et al., 2007].

This study set out to explore, among other things, forest-dependent people’s understanding and experience of poverty and vulnerability, the shocks and crises that affect their livelihoods and the coping mechanisms they adopt in the face of shocks.

3.1.3 Forest-dependent people’s understanding of poverty

Forest-dependent people’s understanding and experience of poverty varied according to their primary livelihoods and the topology of their habitat. Communities in forest areas on hills and mountains, as in Kisoro and Kaabong, and those in drought-prone areas such as Kaabong and Nakasongola said that poverty manifested itself in levels of household food security:

“Poverty is when a household is not able to harvest enough food to take them through the dry season. The poor harvest two bags [about 150 kg] of maize, two tins [about 50 kg] of beans, and 8 kg of millet. Those who are “not so poor” are the ones who harvest at least 10 bags of maize, 5 bags of beans, 15 bags of millet, and 15 bags of sunflower.”

Focus group discussion with 21 men on the banks of Murongole CFR in Kaabong district.

These sentiments were echoed by respondents in Timu forest in Kaabong district and Wabisi-Wajala forest in Nakasongola district. They added that poor people are the ones who cannot grow crops, either because they lack tools such as ox-drawn ploughs or because they are aged, disabled or too young. According to the cattle keepers in Kasagala forest in Nakasongola district, those who do not have livestock are also considered poor.

In Hoima and Kalangala, the respondents said that poverty manifested itself in poor or temporary housing, bedding and clothing, low incomes and consequent inability to obtain basic necessities or pay school fees, and inability to access or afford healthcare. Rapid population growth as a result of high fertility is another factor.

The respondents in Hoima also mentioned two other interesting dynamics that cause poverty. In terms of livelihood choices, there is much hand-to-mouth subsistence farming in forest-adjacent communities in Hoima, where tobacco growing has replaced farming of food crops with resulting food shortages. One explanation is that tobacco growing is so labour-intensive that there is little time left in the year to devote to food crops. With regard to the cultural context, one informant in the district alleged that:

“We, the Banyoro [the main cultural group in Hoima] consider ourselves above labour. In fact, the word omunyoro literally means “chief” or “boss”. We have remained perennially poor as a result of this poor attitude towards work.”

3.1.4 The experience and causes of vulnerability among forest-dependent communities

Vulnerability in this study denotes the probability of being in poverty today or falling into deeper poverty in the future, and the likelihood that shocks result in adverse welfare outcomes [World Bank, undated]. In all the forest-dependent communities investigated, poverty also manifested itself in forms other than low incomes and inability to obtain necessities. In many ways, poverty in these communities was also about powerlessness, social exclusion and lack of knowledge; other causes of vulnerability include environmental, economic, social, health and lifecycle risks.

Powerlessness

Powerlessness among forest-dependent communities appears primarily in two forms, which may be inter-related: lack or insufficiency of land, and voicelessness often associated with isolation. In Kalangala, Hoima, Nakasongola and Kisoro a major problem was lack of or insufficiency of land.
for people to use for livelihood activities. This is first of all because the forests and therefore the land on which they grow belongs to the Government, or in the case of the Mailo in Nakasongola, to absentee landlords. The people are viewed by the NFA and landlords as illegal encroachers who must be evicted from the land. The question whether social services should be established in communities living on government forestland needs to be resolved. A forestry officer at Kakooge NFA office in Nakasongola angrily wondered “... why we should even be asking about social services for these people when they are illegally encroaching on forest land”. Similar sentiments were expressed in Kaabong district. In other words, the legality of the settlement determines the level of service delivery communities will receive.

In Nakasongola the situation is so grave that the people live in perpetual fear of eviction, and claim that they do not have anywhere else to go. In the Wabisi-Wajala forest, it recently emerged that the Uganda People’s Defence Force is claiming the land as theirs. The people who occupy part of it and wish to expand their occupancy to previously uninhabited areas have been stopped. This has caused anxiety and uncertainty among the people to the extent that they are unable to plan for long-term livelihoods.

“We are afraid to think about development programmes because we are being threatened to be evicted. The barracks has been asking us to leave this community since 2014. A soldier came to a National Agricultural Advisory Services meeting and told us that we should not ask for fruit tree or other perennial crop seedlings. In about 2011, Save the Children built this little pre-school day-care centre. The intention was to provide a place for our young children to stay as we go to work, and reduce the distances they would have to move to get to school. However, they could not complete the plan of building more classrooms because the barracks started threatening us to leave. The barracks insists they want to expand, and that ‘these villages are the veranda of the barracks’. There was also a district programme to build a dam here but it was stopped because of threats from the barracks that we should be evicted.” Women respondents from Kashako and Kabira villages in Wabisi-Wajala forest.

For the people of Kalangala, Hoima and Nakasongola, another challenge is confrontation and victimization by NFA officials. In Nakasongola for example, the people living in a village in Kasagala forest reserve refused to meet the research team because they feared that NFA officials wanted to trap them. Instead, they sent their village leaders to meet the team and judge whether it was safe to talk to us.

In Hoima and Kalangala there is mutual mistrust between NFA’s community forest management approach and the villagers. Villagers complained that the NFA saw them as criminals responsible for the destruction of forests, even though the communities do their best to protect the forests:

“High powered, politically connected business people come and cut the forests for timber, with the authorities just looking on.” Respondents in Hoima.

As a result, the villagers decided on “retaliatory” exploitation of the forests, which they consider to be theirs, and feel bitter that outsiders are exploiting them. Communities also justify some of their encroachment by saying that livelihoods come first, not the forests.

“We, the local people, have lost ownership rights to the public forests. Because of this, there is indiscriminate exploitation of forests, degradation and deforestation whenever people get the opportunity.” Respondents in Kalangala.

In Kisoro, the Batwa have no land for resettlement after eviction from the Bwindi and Mgahinga forests. According to a respondent from the United Organization for Batwa Development in Uganda (UOBDU), between 6 000 and 7 000 Batwa need to be resettled. Respondents in Kisoro added:

“The Batwa communities have remained poor due to number of factors such as lack of land for resettlement and agriculture. They survive on begging, and they are labourers in other people’s gardens.”
An earlier study by UOBDU reported that of 2,551 Batwa only 46 had any kind of sustainable income or considered themselves “employed”. Mostly landless, the Batwa gain income from selling their labour to neighbouring farms – this constitutes 90 percent of their income [UOBDU, 2004]. Indeed before Bwindi was gazetted as a national park in 1991, the regulations about rights of access to the forest were more liberal and not often enforced. The gazetting of Bwindi affected the Batwa and the people living near the forests because access to the forest was terminated and resentment and conflict among the communities and park authorities resulted (Blomley, 2003; Namara, 2006).

Exclusion and marginalization

Social exclusion manifests itself in various forms depending on where people live. In communities living in forest areas on hills, mountains and islands an important characteristic of social exclusion is the lack of connectedness with other communities and service points. Schools, health facilities and water sources are distant and often inaccessible, and government services such as Operation Wealth Creation, youth livelihood programmes and community-driven development do not reach them.

There are no schools or health facilities near the communities surrounding Murongole forest reserve and in Timu forest. The nearest government school to the communities in Timu forest, for example, is 20 km away; for urgent health services community members go to the nearby army detachment, which can supply drugs and equipment but has no actual health facility. There are few, mostly poor roads connecting these communities to sub-county and parish centres where most of the services are located.

“There are no government programmes in this community that we know of. The distance from this community to the nearest Universal Primary Education school is 35 km. The distance to the nearest health centre is 8 km down the mountain. The distance to the nearest water source provided by the government, a borehole, is 7 km, also down the mountain.” Men respondents on the upper slopes of Mount Murongole.

Similarly, communities around Bwindi forest reserve reported that they had to travel 27 km to Mutolere hospital. The few small community health centres cannot provide all the facilities or treatments that the people require, so they have to go to the hospital. Respondents also noted that there are no roads connecting some villages, which makes it difficult to travel or market their produce.

In Kalangala, not all the islands visited had connecting public transport. People have to hire boats and pay for expensive fuel. On the islands themselves, road transport is difficult. The lack of road and water transport makes it difficult for people to access services and markets. Respondents reported that some islands do not have schools, health facilities or markets, and that people had to hire rowing boats to the other islands or the mainland to access these services. Bufumira Island, for example, has only one primary school and no secondary school; the nearest secondary school is at Bugala Island, 30 minutes away by boat.

An informant at Wabinyonyi sub-county in Nakasongola claimed that the reason why the people of Kasagala forest area are under-served is that the place is isolated, roads are poor and it takes too long to get there, an assertion that was corroborated at the focus group discussions.

Another aspect of social exclusion is the lack of representation for forest-dependent communities. In Kalangala, for example, there were allegations of marginalization: the restrictions on forest use for reasons of conservation had been criticised by community members and because of that NFA and district officials never consulted them. Although the district officials claimed to work with communities to manage and conserve the forests, none of the community members interviewed seemed to have heard of the collaborative forest management system. This implied that poor forest-dependent community members are not involved in the management of the forest resource. Indeed, some said that:
“... our needs are not sought. We are considered as enemies to government, always chased around whenever they find us near forests. They always harass us.”

In Kaabong, lack of “voice” is a result of remoteness, traditional cultural life and lack of education among the forest-dependent communities. There are very few educated people among the Ik, which limits their participation in elections and other forms of representation. A focus group discussion with opinion leaders complained:

“We miss out on many interventions because there is no one to represent us. There is no one in the decision-making processes to articulate our needs and how they can be solved. Because of this we are neglected, which has kept us at the beginning of development.”

Community members in Timu forest felt that they lacked services such as education and health, but paradoxically they did not express concerns about their way of life or think that it affected their economic wellbeing. They believed that if the forest could be maintained in its natural form as much as possible, they would not have much to worry about. In their opinion, the forest should be sufficient to provide for their livelihood needs:

“We believe that our life is good. In the past, some organizations came to help. For example in the 1980s, there was a lot of famine. People moved about looking for food. The Red Cross came and gave food. Then people from the Adventist Development and Relief Agency came in 1994 up to 2003 giving food to schools. After that time, the rains came and we have not had any major food shortages to date. Otherwise, the forest is sufficient to meet our livelihood needs.” Focus group discussion with men in Turutur village in Timu Forest.

These findings echo Sunderlin et al. (2007), who averred that the convergence of poverty and forests could be explained by: remoteness from technology, markets and socio-economic progress; tradition and culture in that people live in traditional ways and depend completely on forest resources; and accessibility in that forests are often accessible to all with few barriers to entry, and can be used as a means of survival.

The Batwa in Kisoro face economic exclusion. Members of other communities perceive them as lazy, unable to engage in useful agriculture and as beggars and garbage collectors. The Batwa, however, feel that they are marginalized as an ethnic group. They seek labour on other people’s farms and business enterprises just like other people, but they claim to be paid less than others:

“We are always paid UGX 4 000 for the same amount of work for which other community members earn UGX 7 000 per day.” Focus group discussion with Batwa women.

Respondents believe that the Government is responsible for the discrimination against the Batwa. Blomley (2003) reports that before Bwindi was gazetted as a national park in 1991 the regulations about the right to access the forest were more liberal. According to Namara (2006), however, when the national park was gazetted the Batwa who had previously lived in the forest were evicted and no longer permitted to enter the park or access its resources, and therefore had to adopt new livelihood options. But they were neither resettled nor integrated into society. An informant from the Gorilla Organization noted:

“Before the eviction of the Batwa, they entirely depended on hunting and gathering. They never engaged in any labour intensive activities. So currently, even in their new residences or communities, they cannot easily dig nor do other agricultural related activities that require much effort.”

The disruption of their habitat and livelihood without psychological preparation or orientation has continued to affect the rate at which they are assimilated into the “outside world”.

**Gender-based marginalization**

Levels of gender integration and affirmative action in decision-making and labour participation in forest management are generally low. A study by Banana et al. (2012), in the Lake Victoria agro-ecological zones, stated that most private companies that own or grow forests believed that local
participation in forest management was not necessary, and they did not think that a gendered perspective in forest management would be useful or necessary. The study attributed women’s poor participation in on-farm tree planting and commercial plantation initiatives to gender disparities in land ownership, cultural norms and practices, heavy domestic workloads, limited access to credit and farm inputs and provision of seedlings of tree species that were not preferred by women.

The reasons why women did not favour the most commonly available tree species were: i) that growing trees for timber required a long rotation period, which was unfavourable to local people and especially women; and ii) that there were few tree species that met women’s needs for firewood, food and nutritional security, soil fertility improvement and water conservation. Banana et al. (2012) also noted that the problem was exacerbated by inadequate budgets, the limited number of trained women foresters and researchers, the strenuous nature of some forest activities and low staff awareness about gender mainstreaming.

The vulnerabilities discussed above are not mutually exclusive: in fact they reinforce each other in many ways, resulting in shocks and crises affecting forest-dependent communities. They also underscore the reasons for low provision of rural development and social protection for these communities. One factor that links all the vulnerabilities together is the question of the legality of occupancy of or dependence on forests. Where government officials believe that the communities are encroaching on gazetted forests, it is unlikely that they will be served by development or social protection programs.

**Shocks, crises and coping mechanisms**

Shocks are events that have catastrophic economic and social effects at the individual, household and community levels. In the communities investigated, shocks and crises occur on a regular basis: they are almost expected, and yet nothing seems to be done to prepare households and communities to mitigate their effects.

**Effects of population increase**

Because of the restrictions on using forestland coupled with unfavourable land-tenure systems, communities near forests find themselves increasingly sharing small pieces of land with their growing families; this was most evident in Kisoro, Hoima and Nakasongola. The pressure on land threatens environmental security in areas surrounding protected forests.

In the area around Bwindi, for example, high population density combined with subsistence agriculture and the absence of other livelihood options have accumulated to a situation where every piece of land, including swamps and steep hill slopes, are drained and transformed into farmland (Korbee, 2007). In Nakasongola, the livestock population is more dangerous than the human population in that herdsmen have grazed animals to the point of uprooting grass and shrubs and leaving the soil bare. When there is no more grass cover the herdsmen resort to encroaching on the forests, evading NFA officers and grazing their animals in other people’s gardens at night. A few resort to zero-grazing by collecting water and feed for their animals and feeding them at home.

**Ill health**

Ill health as a shock was encountered in Kaabong and Kalangala districts. In Kaabong, it is believed that people contracted diseases from animals as far back as the 1980s when people shared shelters with them. The poor health among the people on the banks of Murongole forest reserve is caused by the severe cold on the high slopes of the mountain. They do not seek medical treatment for diseases and claim to have learnt to live with them. The main cause of ill health in Kalangala is HIV and AIDS: according to the district planner, HIV prevalence in the district is high.

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7 Environmental security refers to the relationship between the natural environment and human wellbeing; it is the absence of negative impacts from environmental degradation and resource scarcity and involves the availability of environmental services for people and nature (Hecker, 2005).
at 18 percent, and fishing communities are highly vulnerable to the disease. Isolated communities such as the ones on the islands of Kalangala district find it difficult to obtain regular information or services related to HIV and AIDS and other social issues.

**Seasonality of fishing**

This is a characteristic of the livelihoods in Kalangala and Nakasongola, but because fishing is an alternative livelihood for many in Nakasongola the effects are not significant. In Kalangala, fishing constitutes 60 percent of livelihoods and homes are gathered round fish landing sites. Most poor community members are labourers in fishing ventures. Women who lack the capacity to invest in fishing work for others as fish smokers and traders. All other livelihoods depend on fishing. Because the fishing seasons are March–May and September–October only, there are serious effects on people’s wellbeing; firewood traders, for example, will sell less during non-fishing periods because fish smokers will not have work to do. According to a forestry officer:

“... all other livelihoods are based on fishing. There is no activity at all when fish are not available.”

To understand why this should remain a crisis when people anticipate it and have the opportunity to invest in alternative livelihoods, the forestry officer revealed that there is a poor saving culture among the fishing people and added that because fishing can no longer sustain their livelihoods:

“... many poor people practice illegal and destructive fishing methods that have depleted fish stocks. This has in turn contributed to the livelihood shift towards excessive exploitation of forest resources, lowered production and profitability and therefore increased poverty levels. Many people have now resorted to forests as an alternative survival mechanism. This has degraded soils through erosion.”

There are other common coping mechanisms. To send their children to school and access health services, communities in Kaabong built schools that run from pre-school to primary level 3 and a health centre. They used community resources, with assistance from local governments through the Northern Uganda Social Actions Fund and community-based organizations. The facilities are run by volunteers. The health centre in Timu was facilitated by a couple from the United States doing literacy research in the community: it supports children under 5 and pregnant and lactating women. The couple’s advocacy with the Government in September 2014 led to the raising of the community health centre to government health centre II status and the employment of an assistant nurse to work there. At the time of this research, the centre had only the assistant nurse to serve over 500 people.

In response to low yields and food shortages, families adjust their consumption to one meal a day. Others, especially in Hoima, Nakasongola, and Kalangala, sell some of their livestock or household assets to buy food and school materials for their children.

Others do not have any assets to sell and have already sold their food to purchase services such as education and healthcare. These people often resort to the forest for survival: they extract resources such as wild honey, gold and fruit for sale, and also burn shrubs and wood for charcoal, or illegally fell trees for timber.

These findings resonate with the observation in Wunder et al. [2014] that forests and other wild-land based coping options were not in general part of the primary response strategies adopted by households. Reallocation of labour to other sectors such as off-farm work and agriculture, distress sales of assets and reduced consumption were more important responses to covariate shocks. In the case of idiosyncratic shocks, seeking help from social and economic networks was more important than forest-based coping8. Wunder et al. [2014] also showed that households suffering covariate shocks and those that experienced asset poverty in the form of low physical, social and human capital were more likely to resort to coping strategies based on forests and wildland as a default option.

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8 Idiosyncratic shocks are those that affect single or small groups of households; covariate shocks are those that affect most or all households in a community.
3.2 Social protection for forest-dependent communities

This section examines the efforts of communities and government to address the risks and vulnerabilities of forest-dependent communities. It reflects on the policy context of social protection in Uganda, provides an overview of national social protection measures, functions and coverage, considers the prevailing challenges affecting the current social protection system, and discusses the availability of and access to social protection by forest-dependent communities.

3.2.1 The concept of social protection

This study recognizes that there are various definitions of social protection at the regional and international levels. The International Labour Organization [2012] recommends a “social protection floor” that promotes basic and modest social security guarantees for vulnerable populations such as: i) a national set of essential health care services for all residents; ii) income security at the level of the nationally defined poverty line to support children through family or child benefits to facilitate nutrition, education and healthcare; iii) minimum income security through social assistance, social transfer schemes or employment guarantee schemes for all those in active age groups who are able to earn from the labour markets; and iv) income security for old-age and disabled residents through minimum pensions based on the nationally defined poverty level.

The social protection floor hence offers an entry point for introducing social protection interventions among forest-dependent communities. This would go a long way towards addressing issues of social exclusion, political marginalization and other vulnerabilities arising from rural remoteness.

The definition of social protection to be used in Uganda has been agreed in consultations and adopted in the draft Uganda Social Protection Policy. It is to be used by all stakeholders. It provides that: “Social protection refers to public and private interventions to address risks and vulnerabilities that expose individuals to income insecurity and social deprivation, leading to undignified lives. It is a basic service and a human right that ensures dignity of people” [Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development, 2015].

This analysis also borrows from the transformative social protection framework described in Devereux et al. [2004]. This broad approach is appropriate because it considers social risks and vulnerabilities and also allows consideration of a range of policy instruments categorized as: i) Protective – instruments such as cash transfers, food vouchers and disability benefits that provide relief from poverty and deprivation among extremely poor individuals and households; ii) Preventive – instruments that seek to mitigate people’s exposure to risks and protect them from the adverse consequences of livelihood, health and other shocks; examples are social security benefits, social health insurance and risk-pooling mechanisms; iii) Promotive – instruments focusing on improvements in real incomes and capabilities through livelihood enhancing programmes and the creation of physical assets: such instruments include public works, subsidies, training support, microfinance and agricultural subsidies; and iv) Transformative – measures to enhance social justice and economic or social rights: examples include changes to policies and/or legislation to address discriminatory norms and practices such as labour standards and sensitization and awareness-raising campaigns to transform attitudes towards marginalized groups.

3.2.2 An overview of Uganda’s social protection policy environment

Since 2005, when Development Research and Training published the first study of chronic poverty in Uganda, the momentum of social protection policy and programming has accelerated. The Development Research and Training study led to the recognition of social protection in Uganda’s second Poverty Eradication Action Plan (2005–2010), but the concept was not clarified and therefore no specific actions were proposed. The National Development Plans I (2010–2015) and II (2015–2020) went further by treating social protection as a cross-cutting issue and recognizing the critical role of social protection in sustained poverty reduction, inclusive growth and social cohesion. The plans propose to broaden social protection and support systems and integrate social protection into government programmes and policies.
The draft Uganda Social Protection Policy
The Uganda Social Protection Policy that was approved by the Cabinet in December 2015\(^9\) aspires to provide comprehensive social protection services to address risks and vulnerabilities, and to achieve this by increasing access to social security and enhancing care, protection and support for vulnerable people, among other things. The policy recognizes that different population groups face different risks and vulnerabilities associated with age, gender, disability, health, employment, poverty and environmental and natural disasters that negatively affect their wellbeing and require the people concerned to be covered by social protection programmes [Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development, 2015]. Without specifically referring to forest-dependent communities the policy lists vulnerabilities that would be the focus of policy actions: they include drought, famine, floods, storms, epidemics, landslides and collapsing civil structures [p. 14].

Other policies that address social protection for vulnerable groups
A few policies have specific elements that emphasize social protection: these include the National Orphans and Other Vulnerable Children Policy (2004), the National Policy on Disability (2006) and the National Policy for Older Persons [2009]. Policy and plans for orphans and other vulnerable children include elements potentially related to social transfers and social care. For persons with disabilities, the policy relates only to social care, and for older persons the policy and plan relate to social transfers, social insurance and social care services [Wylde et al., 2012]. These policies are not strong on government commitment in terms of service delivery, but they emphasize that the Government would facilitate and encourage community-based responses.

Forestry and related policies: aspects relevant to social protection
This section focuses on the Uganda Forestry Policy (2001), the National Forestry Plan (2013) and the National Agriculture Policy (2013), which have a direct bearing on the relationship between people and forests and other natural resources. Their implementation could affect the social and economic wellbeing of forest-dependent communities. The policy provisions relevant to social protection are shown in Table 3.

The Uganda Forestry Policy, 2001
This policy recognizes that forest communities are often poor and marginalized and frequently dependent on forests for their livelihoods. It also acknowledges the general lack of institutions through which these people can participate in decision-making about forest resource management. The policy also notes the varied interests of men and women in forests, observing that men view trees as sources of construction materials or cash income, whereas women are attracted to forests for their supply of firewood and contribution to food production.

The National Forestry Plan, 2013
This plan appreciates the role of forests as safety nets against shortages of food and income and against ill health. It also observes that the forestry sector is crucial for the survival of other sectors such as agriculture, livestock production, industry, water, energy, health, wildlife and tourism. The objectives of the plan focus on the management of forest resources as a business that contributes to the economic, social and environmental benefits of forest-dependent communities.

The National Agriculture Policy 2013
The inclusion of the policy in this discussion reflects the fact that all the forest-dependent communities that this study interacted with depended largely on agriculture for their livelihoods. The policy provides for agricultural development services to be extended to all categories of farmer as individuals or in groups, with gender equity ensured.

Table 2 shows a summary of the objectives and strategies put forward in these policies that are relevant to social protection. The strategies are those that we believe are of a social protection nature or appropriate to social protection.

\(^9\) Awaiting approval of Parliament.
The social protection definitions and suggestions in the draft Uganda Social Protection Policy and the provisions of the forestry and agricultural policies do not seem to be harmonized, but they all tend towards addressing poverty, vulnerability and marginalization. The draft Social Protection Policy provides no clear path for linking social protection to agricultural or agro-forestry interventions.
<table>
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<th>Country</th>
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| Uganda       | Forestry Policy, 2001                     | Issue: How to encourage forest owners, farmers and communities to improve their livelihoods through new approaches to forestry | Policy statement 5: Development of collaborative forestry partnerships with rural communities  
Policy statement 6: Promotion of on-farm tree growing to increase farm incomes and improve food security | Promote innovative approaches to community participation in forest management: this would include a supportive legal basis for devolved decision-making, tree tenure, access rights and sharing of benefits from forests, and resolution of conflicts with problem animals  
Capacity building for farmers | Forest-dependent communities |
| National     | Forestry Plan, 2013                       | Specific objective (d): raise incomes of households through forest-based initiatives | On-farm natural tree growing - high conservation value  
Education, training and on-farm research | Investment in non-consumptive use of natural forests such as eco-tourism, recreation, bee keeping, herbal medicine, wild coffee gathering and tending fruit trees  
Investment in farmers' field schools and agro-forestry demonstrations | Small-scale tree growers and farmers, particularly young people and women  
Communities |
| National     | Agriculture Policy, 2013                  | Overall objective: achieve food and nutrition security, and improve household incomes  
Specific objectives:  
- increase household food and nutrition security  
- increase incomes of farming households | Promote enterprises that would enable households to earn daily, periodic and long-term incomes  
Encourage and support local governments in enacting and enforcing by-laws that promote household food and nutrition security  
Help farmers to form production and marketing groups  
Promote financial services for farmers | Through the Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Industries and Fisheries, mainstream responses to the needs of vulnerable groups such as women, young people, the elderly and people with disabilities in sector plans and interventions | Farmers at all levels, including rural farmers at household level |
3.2.3 Social protection in response to the vulnerabilities of forest-dependent communities

It is important to note that district community development offices are governed by the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development and are therefore in charge of social protection, but there is no specific programme targeting people living in or near forests. Where such communities were found to benefit from social protection programmes, it was purely by coincidence.

Social Assistance Grant for Empowerment

The Social Assistance Grant for Empowerment (SAGE), the Government’s flagship social protection programme, is a direct-income cash-transfer pilot implemented by the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development. The scheme has two components: i) the Senior Citizens Grant, which targets people aged 65 and over (60 in Karamoja region); and ii) the Vulnerable Family Grant, which targets the poorest 10 percent of households where labour is constrained by age, disability or chronic illness, particularly HIV and AIDS [Oxford Policy Management [OPM], Economic Policy Research Centre [EPRC] and Makerere University, Kampala [MUK], 2013]. Every old person and every vulnerable household in the programme receives UGX 26 000 (USD 7.13) per month.

Social protection to address unemployment

To respond to the challenge of persistently high levels of unemployment among young people, which rose from 44 percent in 2006/06 to 48 percent in 2009/10, the Government is implementing a five-year Youth Livelihoods Programme that provides interest-free revolving grants for youth groups of 10 to 15 members that have a bank account (Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development, 2013).

Evidence of the Youth Livelihood Programme in forest communities

As mentioned above, there was no specific intention to target young people living in or around forests in the programme; where this occurred, it was purely by coincidence. In Nakasongola,
the research team found one group of five women and nine men in Kasagala village in Kasagala forest reserve that had benefited from the Youth Livelihood Programme. The group had received UGX 11.5 million for a cattle project and obtained land from the village chairperson to use free of charge for two years. With regard to the complementary services mentioned in the preceding paragraph, the group said that they only received one half-day awareness session on managing a livestock enterprise delivered by the district production department. They did not receive start-up kits and had to buy inputs such as materials for fencing, drugs, feeding troughs and spraying equipment from their fund. To address knowledge and capacity challenges, group members with previously acquired skills and knowledge passed them on to their colleagues through information-exchange meetings and practical demonstrations.

The research team found that the group had managed to access Youth Livelihood Programme funds because they lived in a community described by the community development officer of Wabinyonyi sub-county as very hard to reach and therefore under-served. The team also found that the group comprised the “village elite” — five of these men were farmers who “grew for the market” on 1.5 ha to 6 ha of land, and the others were two teachers, a pastor and an election officer who engaged in small-scale trade and taught at a secondary school as well. Of the women, one was a small-scale trader and another was a wife of one of the farmers; this woman said that at home she was the “subsistence farmer” while her husband was the “commercial farmer”. This profile of group members affirms our concern that the very poor, who should be benefiting from the social protection programmes, are in practice excluded.

In Hoima, two groups had benefited from the fund. One was already involved in collaborative forestry management with the NFA, and the other was a boda-boda (motorcycle taxi) group that had, in order to pass the criteria for the Youth Livelihood Programme, collaborated with a produce group whose members were more educated and had helped to write a proposal and meet other requirements. These two groups reported high-handed influence from the political leadership of the district.

These are important observations in terms of access to social protection interventions by those who need them most — the chronically poor and vulnerable. These categories of people are self-excluding and also excluded by others, who view them as lazy and unwilling to take risks. Even in such remote rural settings the “village elites” seem to be the ones able to access social protection services. Indeed, a review of the performance of youth funds by the Economic Policy Research Centre found, among other things, that although youth funds are expected to have a national outreach, they are dominated by young people in Central region and towns because of the high concentration of banks in these areas. Also, 70 percent of the youth funds went to enterprises owned by men because young women are largely involved in primary agriculture, which is risky and therefore not credit-worthy [Ahaibwe, 2014].

The Economic Policy Research Centre also found that rural young people lacked or had limited access to information about how to access the funds and that the little information they received was flawed or incomplete. There were also gender disparities in access to information: 61 percent of men reported that they had information about accessing the youth funds, compared with only 30 percent of young women [Ahaibwe, 2014]. These observations are significant in relation to forest-dependent communities because they are typically rural, remote and highly dependent on agriculture or similar enterprises for livelihoods.

Social protection to address effects of climate change

The Farmer-Managed Natural Regeneration project

The project, an initiative of World Vision Uganda, is implemented in four districts, including Nakasongola. It is a model that supports systematic regeneration of trees from stumps, roots and naturally growing seedlings, which is a cheap option for reforestation. The aim is to enhance the resilience and livelihoods of vulnerable communities by increasing household incomes,
addressing the challenges that have arisen as a result of deforestation and increasing tree cover to improve the productivity of agricultural land.

According to the annual report of 2014, the immediate achievements for participating farmers are that they have been able to access tree products and to set up tree-based activities such as beekeeping and livestock rearing. Many have reported an increase in wild foods, bee forage, poles and firewood, which they sell to supplement household incomes. Wild foods contribute to nutritional outcomes because rural households commonly use them to supplement diets, especially during times of food scarcity. The report also notes improvements in the quality and quantity of grass beneath trees in areas where the project is implemented on grazing land; this has in turn improved the quality of the livestock [World Vision Uganda, 2014].

An informant from World Vision in Nakasongola observed that it does not currently work directly with forest communities, but that to sustain project outcomes and replicate them throughout the district it has supported schools in establishing woodlots and trained farmers in sustainable land management and agro-forestry. The organization is also working with the district to develop by-laws to govern tree felling.

Social protection to address social vulnerabilities

Health protection
Health protection comprises free public health services for all citizens, covering all conditions but concentrating on primary healthcare. But, as a result of government financial and resource constraints, some people’s reluctance to seek healthcare and the remoteness of communities such as forest-dependent groups, the health service reaches only 60 percent of Uganda’s population. As noted earlier, some forest communities are 8 km from the nearest government health facility, and the terrain is rugged.

Universal health services are complemented by private not-for-profit health services that cover 30 percent of the population, and private for-profit health services covering 10 percent. Private not-for-profit healthcare is concentrated in remote rural areas, and is typically church-based [Basaza et al. (2007). Some private not-for-profit healthcare providers run community-based health insurance schemes in an attempt to make healthcare accessible to poor people in remote rural areas. In 2007, the Ministry of Health proposed a social health insurance scheme that initially targeted formal-sector workers with a view to gradually expanding to the informal sector [ILO and Mubiru, 2013; Ministry of Health, 2010; Zikusooka and Komuhangi, 2008].

Social health insurance for the Batwa
This free healthcare programme, started with support from Care International Uganda in 2009, is currently run by UOBDU. It responds primarily to the challenges faced by the Batwa in accessing healthcare at government health centres – self-exclusion in the form of reluctance to seek healthcare, stigmatization as an ethnic minority, inability to communicate effectively with health workers and lack of financial resources to access care and treatment that is not available at government health centres. Currently, individuals10 from the UK support the programme. The Batwa receive the services through the Community-Based Health Insurance Scheme at the private church-based St. Francis Mutolere hospital in Kisoro district, where they do not have to pay. In addition to the services available at the hospital, the scheme provides outreach services and supports village health teams that inform Batwa communities about health services provided at the hospital and other centres.

Other UOBDU social protection programmes
Various development partners support UOBDU in social protection programmes responding to the challenges that the Batwa are encountering following their eviction from the forests; these include support for education, livelihood enhancement, water and sanitation improvements, housing, land acquisition and financial services.

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10 They wish to remain anonymous.
Example of social protection support for the Batwa and their children

Legal services
Among the legal services offered to the Batwa communities by UOBDU the most prominent is the petition regarding resettlement and compensation following eviction from the forests in the 1990s. But the Government has not fulfilled its promise to date, leaving many Batwa landless and without a place to practise their livelihoods.

3.2.4 Non-social-protection rural development programmes in forest communities
The study found that the programmes responding to community social and economic needs are generally universal and do not target forest-dependent communities as a special category. Even though almost all of those reviewed were relevant to forest-dependent communities, however, they did not reach them in most districts. The programmes discussed here are those that are relevant to the social protection concept and could be viewed as social protection programmes in that with slight modifications or linkages across sectors, particularly social development and agriculture, they would become typical social protection interventions.

Interventions to address effects of climatic change
The Government has implemented a number of programmes; the most notable are described below.

The Farm Income Enhancement and Forest Conservation Programme
The five-year Farm Income Enhancement and Forest Conservation Programme was implemented by the Ministry of Water and the Environment and the Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Industry and Fisheries from 2007 to 2012 in 31 districts, including Hoima and Nakasongola. The second phase is being designed.

The two interventions of the forestry support component were community watershed management and tree planting. The latter included several activities such as agricultural enterprise development, small-scale irrigation, crop development, soil fertility management, agricultural marketing and promotion of beekeeping. According to the programme review report, in Hoima it mostly involved large-scale irrigation schemes for commercial farmers, whereas in Nakasongola farmers were trained in water and soil conservation methods and small-scale irrigation for their gardens.
Payment for ecosystem conservation
This initiative is implemented by the Eco Trust. When people agree to conserve a critical ecosystem, they receive a payment for the services it provides. Unlike the current market-based instruments relating to carbon, the Eco Trust works in forest communities such as those in Hoima and the CFRs of Bugoma and with poor farmers and commercial tree planters to teach them the principles of collaborative forest management. In the long term, the organization develops carbon-credit programs by connecting the farmers with voluntary carbon markets: the farmers receive periodic payments for the calculated amount of carbon sequestered by the trees they conserve or have planted.

Strengthening the resilience of rural populations
Climate change and its effects are among the shocks reported by respondents in all five districts, manifested in the form of more extreme, frequent and erratic rainfall and more frequent droughts. To address the effects on households and communities, the Global Climate Change Alliance implements interventions to enhance the resilience of rural populations and build the capacities of communities, commercial farmers and local governments to cope with climate change. In Nakasongola, FAO leads these interventions in collaboration with the Nakasongola District Farmers’ Association. Interventions cover climate change awareness and sharing good practices for community adaptation, improved access to water for production through maintenance of tanks and dams, promoting small-scale irrigation, initiating and promoting farmers’ field schools for livestock management and coffee growing and enhancing the understanding of the livestock+pasture+water+soil+people system to facilitate farmers’ decision-making.

Specific activities are rehabilitation of degraded pasture, water harvesting, harvesting and conservation of fodder, soil conservation, improvement of animal breeds and agro-forestry involving introducing new trees and regenerating felled trees in the same garden. There is also a focus on the coffee + banana system, where families are involved in knowledge management processes. The Nakasongola District Farmers’ Association also works in Zengebe parish, though not in the forest-dependent communities in the study, to implement climate change adaptation programmes: they have so far worked with three groups modelling the farmers’ field schools, giving information about climate change and facilitating community adaptation and group action plans. The association also promotes water harvesting and pasture rehabilitation at the household level.

Climate change adaptation programmes in Kaabong
The Government, FAO and Kaabong district local governments support communities in building resilience to climate change, implementing a holistic livelihood programme based on livestock production, crop production and land and water management.

According to the FAO officer in Kaabong, livestock production focuses on production and productivity, and the handling of milk. FAO provides support at the district level, for example by equipping laboratories and training staff in disease control and training community animal health workers, who are extension workers at the grassroots level carrying out disease surveillance, control and prevention. With regard to crop production, the programme is developing appropriate seeds for the Karamoja region in consultation with farmers: sorghum, groundnuts and *simsim* [sesame] are being trialled, and multiplication is under way in different parts of the district. The programme supports community farmers’ groups as channels for knowledge and technological transfer through farmers’ field schools; the FAO officer observed, however, that the water management and water conservation interventions had not advanced much. So far, FAO has been involved on a small scale in micro-irrigation and other irrigation technologies and water conservation technologies along rivers, particularly construction of sub-surface dams through the farmers’ field schools. In these interventions, potential sites are agreed in community consultations and the communities give the land. In one case community members who worked on the project were paid UGX 3 000 during droughts and UGX 5 000 during the harvest season.
The FAO field officer in Kaabong said that the programme had not focused on forest areas, but was beginning to focus on natural resources in collaboration with the district natural resources department. A feasibility study had been carried out, and the hope was that once the programme was fully developed it would include interventions specifically for forest-dependent communities.

**Interventions to address lack of income**

**The Luwero-Rwenzori Development Programme**

Through the Office of the Prime Minister, the Government implements the Luwero-Rwenzori Development Programme with a view to redressing the socio-economic effects of previous conflict in the region. The programme targets 40 districts in Central and Western regions, which include Nakasongola, Kalangala and Hoima. It focuses on improving the economic wellbeing of households, repairing roads, increasing the availability of safe water, protecting and sustainably managing the environment and increasing access to renewable energy for service delivery points and rural growth centres.

The programme is open to all community members engaged in economic activities, but priority is given to special interest groups. To minimize duplication and ensure efficient use of government resources, the programme does not target community members who already benefit from other government programmes.

This study found no evidence of implementation of this project in Kalangala and Hoima districts. In Nakasongola, it is implemented at the parish level, but its reach is restricted because of limited funds. According to the chief of Lwampanga sub-county, it reaches only six people per parish who must be vulnerable old people, widows, people living with HIV and people with a disability.

**Interventions to enhance community participation**

**Community-Driven Development**

The Community-Driven Development Programme is an initiative of the Ministry of Local Government. It is designed to create an interface between local governments and communities through integrated local planning and budgeting, and to ensure greater involvement of communities in decision-making and resource utilization. The theme is “communities as drivers of change”. The programme supports community activities that improve governance and investment, and aims to enhance the linkage between communities and local governments by empowering the former to champion their own development and demand local service delivery.

**Interventions to respond to drought, famine and food insecurity**

Several programmes in Kaabong and Nakasongola aim to address the forms and causes of food insecurity in the districts. The introduction of drought-resistant crops such as cassava, sorghum, maize and millet is common to both districts, and there have been attempts to introduce fruit trees. The organizations involved include the World Food Programme, World Vision, FAO and local governments working through Operation Wealth Creation.

Other short-term interventions to respond to food shortages involve supplying food for the people concerned. During the migrations of the Baluuri from Lango to Nakasongola in the late 1980s and early 1990s, for example, the Nakasongola District Risk Reduction Committee petitioned the Office of the Prime Minister and other agencies to provide food aid for the migrants before they were settled in Wabisi-Wajala forest. More recently the committee supported communities whose crops had been destroyed by floods and hailstorms, but they were not necessarily forest-dependent communities.

In Kaabong, non-governmental organizations have sensitized communities about food security. Between 2010 and 2013, when the National Agricultural Advisory Services Programme was introduced in Timu parish, ACF International/Action Against Hunger and World Vision distributed agricultural inputs and equipment to farmers in Timu forest. Between 2012 and 2014, when famine and drought hit the district, the Office of the Prime Minister was reported to have distributed...
maize floor and farm inputs for the forest communities in Kaabong to ensure that households were food-secure.

ACF International/Action Against Hunger implemented food-for-work programmes when they pioneered the construction of community roads and dams from 2012 to 2014. Every person who worked earned 25 kg of food per month; the participants were mostly young people. The programme experienced several challenges: i) some workers claimed that they never received their food rations because their names did not appear on the list; and ii) some sub-counties resisted the programme, which is noteworthy. Respondents in Timu forest emphasized that the Ik believe that they should not work for food since it is a basic entitlement: they do not oppose the notion of working, but would rather work for cash or a health voucher or some other benefit – but not for food. According to them, access to food should be unconditional.

3.2.5 Gaps in social protection provisions for forest-dependent communities

Challenges with collaborative forestry management

According to the NFA, collaborative forest management has had some success in communities such as those surrounding Mabira, Rwoho, Kasyoha-Kitomi, Budongo and Echuya CFRs. But the processes are time-consuming and can be expensive: more time and financial resources are needed to achieve and consolidate results. The benefit-sharing guidelines are not clear, and many of the respondents for this study had never benefited from collaborative forest management; they seemed to understand it only as a process for ensuring that communities do not destroy the forests.

Lack of social protection for fishing communities

Fishing is one of the alternative livelihoods for forest communities. Among the challenges affecting the fisheries sector is the seasonality of fishing, which particularly affects small-scale fishing communities. One of the reasons for this could be that there is no agreement among policy actors as to the precise seasonality of fishing. Consultations for this study revealed wide differences in opinion among policy actors as to the reality of fishing seasons, but fishing people emphasized the problem and seemed to be frustrated that they had no alternative livelihoods.
4. Social protection for forest-dependent people and sustainable forestry

4.1 Conclusion
The forest-dependent communities in Uganda are neither homogeneous nor recognized by the Government as a special vulnerable category. Of the three categories of forest-dependent people identified in this report, those who live inside forests and derive nearly all their livelihoods from them are the most dependent and most vulnerable. The group who live close to forests and depend partially on them and partially on other livelihoods, and the group who depend on forests only for economic benefits appear to be less vulnerable.

Forest-dependent communities are under-served by social and rural development programmes because: i) they are mostly in remote rural areas with poor roads and transport; ii) most are in mountainous terrain and almost isolated from other communities; and iii) many are in gazetted forests and live in fear of eviction. Some groups have been evicted without compensation or support in adapting to alternative livelihoods.

Climate change affects forest-dependent communities significantly, but variously. Those who depend on rain-fed agriculture, as in Kaabong and Nakasongola for example, are affected by shorter and more irregular rainy seasons that reduce agricultural production. The forest-dependent communities in areas experiencing extreme weather conditions are particularly affected: when drought comes, it is long and severe, and when the rains come they are heavy and destructive. These communities typically depend on livestock and agriculture for their livelihoods.

Overall, rural development programmes implemented by state and non-state actors are universal, and lack a specific focus on forest-dependent communities. In a few instances it emerged that these programmes may be inappropriate to the cultural orientation of the beneficiary communities.

4.2 Recommendations
This study makes the following recommendations with a view to providing and improving social protection for forest-dependent communities:

1. Forest-dependent communities would benefit from specifically targeted programmes or universal programmes that are adjusted to maximize opportunities to support them. The forestry and social protection sub-sectors need to collaborate on interventions that enhance conservation as well as social development outcomes.

2. Because most forest-dependent communities are engaged in subsistence farming, agricultural policies and programmes should focus on this area. Research is needed to establish and recommend appropriate technologies for forest habitats; programmes such as Operation Wealth Creation should work with research institutions with a view to supplying suitable agricultural inputs to these communities.

3. Training and support for alternative livelihoods are needed for evicted communities that were solely dependent on forests with a view to enabling them to prosper in the "life outside the forest". In particular, communities that face extreme weather need to be advised and mentored with regard to adopting supplementary livelihoods.

4. The Farmer-Managed Natural Regeneration model needs to be replicated in all forest-dependent communities to conserve the natural habitat and minimize the social and
economic effects of climate change. The promotion of local tree species and improved food crops should be adopted, especially in the semi-arid areas.

5. The Government needs to address the issue of evictions without resettlement plans. It must find land to resettle the evicted Batwa in Kisoro and the Baluuri in Nakasongola, who are threatened with eviction. Without proper resettlement these communities will not be able to invest in viable livelihoods and will remain perpetually poor.

6. Access rights for communities adjacent to forests need to be recognized in full. The animosity between communities and NFA officials needs to be addressed, and the Collaborative Forestry Management guidelines need to be clarified and the agreements with communities respected. If this is not done, people’s commitment to conserving forests will continue to decline. Approaches to conservation such as those adopted by Eco Trust, which are based on the “payment for ecosystem services” system, need to be replicated.

7. The question whether social services need to be established in communities living on gazetted forestland needs to be resolved. The illegality of the settlements should not be used to determine the level of services delivered to the communities, particularly if the Government has not provided them with a suitable alternative.

8. In view of the lack of connectedness or collaboration between the sectors that affect forest-dependent communities and the social protection sub-sector, a policy-engagement process is necessary with a view to creating awareness among policy actors as to the synergies that need to be developed in designing and implementing programmes for the improvement of socio-economic livelihoods in forest-dependent communities.

9. Because of the complexity of the issues affecting forest-dependent communities, more studies are needed to investigate ways of providing a more harmonised and transformative social protection system.

An example of social protection – conservation collaboration

The Project for the Conservation of Nyungwe National Park in Rwanda devised an approach that involved collaboration with a social protection programme. The approach was based on the recognition that around most national parks there are poor and marginalized people who have no option but to enter protected areas to poach, cut timber or mine illegally. The project reflected the Savings and Credit Cooperative Organizations Programme in designing an interest-free credit scheme for people obliged to depend on wildlife resources by illegal means. Project teams consulted this group to identify income-generating activities that suited them. The people were given cash grants as capital for starting the activities, but they were disguised as credit provided through the Savings and Credit Cooperative Organizations. The income-generating activities were monitored, and once the groups were active project officers and local resource officers urged their inclusion in social protection programmes for public works. The monthly income from the social-protection programmes supplemented low income from the conservation enterprises. The rationale is two-sided: conservationists know that “... if we can account for your time, we are certain you are not poaching”, and steady incomes dissuade people from resorting to killing wildlife, decimating forests or participating in risky illegal behaviour.
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A mapping of social protection needs and opportunities for forest-dependent communities in Uganda

For detailed information, please contact:
Qiang Ma
Forestry Officer
Forestry Governance and Economics Team
Forestry Policy and Resources Division
Qiang.Ma@fao.org
fao.org/forestry/social-protection