

Community Environmental Conservation in Uganda: Possibilities and Limitations of Decentralized Management[♦]

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ウガンダにおける地域主導の環境保全：分権的管理の可能性と限界

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環境問題は近年重要な世界的課題である。とりわけ発展途上国においては、さまざまな環境劣化が人々の生活に重大な影響を及ぼしている。他方、他方途上国政府の対策は必ずしも効果を上げていない。この問題の解決にあたって、途上国では近年地方分権化を推進し、地域住民の主体的参加による活動を実施している。人々の参加によって、地域の現状に即した効果的・効率的な資源の活用と保全が可能になるからである。本研究はアフリカのなかでも地方分権政策が進んでいるウガンダにおいて、地方評議会（Local Council）を通じた地域住民による資源管理の方法の効果を検証するものである。その結果、中央と地方との連携の重要性、アフリカの開発を巡る様々な二元的視点の克服、そして知識のあり方に関する重要な問題点が考察される。

Due to population growth, unsustainable resource utilization, increasing urbanization and industrial activities, Uganda's stock of natural resources has come under increasing threat of degradation or depletion. These pressures on natural resources have resulted in undesirable phenomena such as land fragmentation, overgrazing and soil erosion among others (Uganda, MoFPED, 1999, p. 95).

1. Introduction

Environmental degradation is a global concern, and African is no exception. It is perhaps very ironic to observe the coexistence of rich wildlife (which attracts foreign tourists) and stark poverty of the majority of Africans. Thus, environmental issues in Africa and elsewhere are entangled with economic as well as socio-political issues, which requires comprehensive approach for effective and sustainable solution.

Debate between “conservation” and “development” in Africa carries historical legacies.¹ The state apparatus, which took over those of the colonial powers in the post-independence era, were largely centralized, because at that time the “strong state” was considered to serve national integration and

[♦] This is a follow up to my series of study on Uganda's decentralization. This article is based on findings during the fieldwork in 2002, which was kindly funded by Socio-Cultural Research Institute, Ryukoku University, Japan.

¹ See Beinart (2000) and Broch-Due (2000) for excellent reviews of the contemporary history of environmental issues in Africa.

economic growth. The emphasis placed by new leaders was more on development rather than on conservation. Even when precious wildlife habitat was recognized, the way in which conservation was practiced was a more 'top-down' manner. Central authorities located far from valuable habitat areas imposed restriction of resource access and utilization, quite often without prior notice to local residents who have been dependent on such resources for generations after generations. Fences were put by the authorities, and forceful relocations of residents often took place. It was no surprise that local residents showed little cooperation with conservation authorities.

This "fortress conservation" approach has proved undoubtedly ineffective. This realization has promoted a new thinking on how to achieve sustainable development balancing environmental concerns and poverty alleviation requirements. There are several important reasons which promoted this shift from the conventional state-imposed natural resource management to a more collaborative and participatory approach. First, the state interventions into economic management in Africa have largely proven ineffective, according to an influential school of economists who guided economic restructuring, especially since the 1980s. The adjustment programs reduced the state's involvement in economy, which indirectly (if not directly) affected ways in which the state enforced natural resource management.

Second, the contrasting experiences of activities carried out by non-governmental organizations (NGO) have shown that effective and sustainable development requires participation of various stakeholders including local residents. While in the past top-down policies and activities by the state were the norm, now it becomes crucial to ensure that the grassroots poor participate in decision-making processes of events which affect their lives significantly.

Consequently, it was envisaged that natural resource management would become more effective with inclusive consultation processes with local resource users. Thus a new notion of "community conservation" has replaced the earlier approach of "fortress conservation."² Community conservation can be defined as "ideas, policies, practices and behaviours that seek to give those who live in rural environments greater involvement in managing the natural resources (soil, water, species, habitats, landscapes or biodiversity) that exist in the areas in which they reside (be that permanently or temporarily) and/or greater access to benefits derived from those resources" (Hulme and Murphree, 2001b, p. 4).³

A main rationale of community conservation is that this approach would induce more cooperative attitudes by local residents on conservation activities, which in turn becomes more effective in the long run. In addition, because environmental issues differ widely from one area to another, local level management is more suitable to meet different local requirements (Barrow et al., 2000, p. 144).

² There is a lexicon of terms. Some analysts (for instance, Ostrom, 1990; and Gibson et al., 1998) use the term "common property resource management." Other examples include integrated conservation and development projects; community-based conservation; community-based natural resource management; community wildlife management; collaborative (or co-) management (Barrow and Murphree, 2001, p. 37). Good review of the literature can be found in Agrawal, 2001; Brown, 2000; and Ribot, 2001 and 2002.

³ See also Adams and Hulme, 2001, p. 13 and Barrow et al., 2000, p. 35.

Decentralized management is deemed more appropriate for facilitating community conservation (Dubois and Lowore, 2000; Fortmann et al., 2001; Ribot, 1999, 2001, and 2002; Okoth-Ogendo and Tumushabe, 1999). Various donors and NGOs have therefore advocated this approach, and several projects were implemented subsequently. Perhaps the most well-known example on the African context is Community Areas Management Programme for Indigenous Resources (CAMPFIRE) in Zimbabwe.⁴

As a result, community conservation, by the end of 1990s, has now almost become a “new orthodoxy,” particularly in Africa.⁵ But several questions remain (Lind and Cappon; 2001): is the community conservation approach really panacea as argued by donors and advocates? What would be the record of this new approach? What kind of lessons does it generate for us to move forward? A recent review of community conservation practice in East Africa concludes as follows:

Though certain and significant exceptions have been made to this general rule [of decentralisation and localization of development and service provisions], notably the retention of central control over national parks, wildlife reserves and many forest reserves, local government responsibility for natural resource management is increasingly becoming an important feature of government policy (Barrow et al., 2000, p. 15).

The purpose of this article is to assess whether decentralization processes and community participation in natural resource management has contributed to the intended objectives of achieving sustainable development.⁶ Community conservation is in fact an extremely demanding task in attempting to achieve both economic progress in mitigating wide-spread poverty as well as environmental conservation halting the increasing degradations of various natural resources. Is community conservation a truly effective policy to “kill two birds with one stone”?

This article draws on materials from Uganda. After the National Resistance Movement (NRM) took power in 1986, it has been implementing a consistent decentralization program, which is one of the most clearly defined and elaborated in the African continent (Saito, 2003). In addition, the NRM government has also been improving the regulatory framework of environmental control, management and conservation by implementing a series of legislations. Thus, the case study of Uganda presents a unique opportunity to see whether decentralized environmental conservation can

⁴ On CAMPFIRE, see, *inter alia*, chapters of 15, 16, and 18 of Hulme and Murphree, 2001a; and Fortmann et al., 2001.

⁵ Adams and Hulme (2001) points out that there are several reasons why community conservation has diffused widely in Africa, including the continent’s dependence on external aid (p. 18).

⁶ Holling (1995) nicely summarizes the notion of sustainability as follows: “Sustainable development is neither an ecological problem, a social problem, nor an economic problem. It is an integrated combination of all three. Effective investments in sustainable development therefore simultaneously retain and encourage the adaptive capabilities of people, business enterprises, and nature. The effectiveness of those adaptive capabilities can turn the same unexpected event (e.g. drought, price change, market shifts) into an opportunity for one system, or a crisis for another. These adaptive capacities depend on the processes that permit renewal in society, economies, and ecosystems. For nature it is biosphere structure; for business it is usable knowledge; and for society as a whole it is a trust.” See also Gunderson and Holling (2002).

contribute to resolve one of the most serious global challenges as of now.

2. Background of Environmental Sector in Uganda

Uganda's current environmental management policies and practices date back to the colonial history. This legacy has created a protectionist perception in which resource users are problem makers. This perception guided the creation of national parks, wildlife and forest reserves in which resource users have been either restricted or banned. The total of these restricted areas comprises approximately 8% of Uganda's total land area (Green, 1995, p. 2, quoted in Hulme and Infield, 2001, p. 106; Barrow et al., 2001b, p. 59).

In the mean time, two relatively recent developments have influenced the environmental regime in Uganda. First, as international environmental concerns attract global attention, Uganda signed important conservation international conventions (Barrow et al., 2000, p. 14). Second, partly influenced by this Uganda's participation in conventions, a new constitution, 1995, clearly stipulates that environmental issues form one of the important matters for the state and the people in Uganda.

Following the new constitution, the National Environment Statute, 1995 was passed to establish the National Environment Management Authority (NEMA). While NEMA is responsible for monitoring, planning and coordination of environmental matters, implementation is the responsibility of relevant ministries. Environment liaison units within respective ministries are responsible for integrating environmental concerns into their sectoral plans, and implementing environmental activities within their mandate (Ogaram and Wabunoha, 1997).

The constitution also acknowledges decentralization as one of the major efforts for state (re)building. The processes of decentralization were accelerated in the early 1990s. The Local Council (LC) system, which is a hierarchy of councils and committees, became an important forum for local people to interact with authorities. Before decentralization measures were implemented, environmental issues were handled largely by the ministries which were in charge of sector activities. With decentralization, each LC is responsible for overall planning and implementation of development activities, including environmental conservation.

3. Decentralization and LC system

The Section 15 of the National Environment Statute mandates the establishment of the District Environment Committee (DEC). The DEC is to ensure that environmental concerns are integrated into activities carried out by each district in accordance with the national environmental policy. For this purpose, districts are asked to mobilize human and other resources (Lind and Cappon, 2001, p.22). There are nine members who form the DEC, including councillors, sub-county chiefs (lower administrative level officers), farmer representatives, NGO representatives, and extension staff (interview with Solomon Musoke, DEO Mukono District, 16 August 1999). But in reality, at this level, any other committee either in charge of production and extension services or in charge of

health matters often serves as the DEC rather than an independent DEC is created.

In each district, there should be a District Environmental Officer (DEO), who is responsible for overall planning and management of environmental concerns. In most of the districts, DEOs are staffed.⁷ The tasks of the DEOs include, according to the Section 16 of the National Environment Statute: creating environmental awareness; incorporating environmental activities in schools and other activities; monitoring economic activities which may have adversarial impacts; building data base on environmental issues in each district; and supporting implementation of environmental actions within the district. (interview with Solomon Musoke, *ibid*).

At sub-county level as well, there is supposed to be a Local Environment Committee (LEC) required by the Statute. But in practice the establishment of LEC varies from one are to another considerably. In one district it was interpreted that sub-county can decide whether to establish local environment committee (interview with James Ssemugai, DEO Rakai District, 24 August 1999).

It is at this level where technical personnel such as agricultural extension officers and health workers are allocated. At this level, there is no designated environmental officer, and usually agricultural staff are asked to look after environmental issues. But they face formidable obstacles to discharge their duties. They are busy with the originally assigned duties, and are also deprived of a means of transportation.

At the grassroots level, the LC system is valuable as a forum for consultation, but local residents do not necessarily consider it as an effective problem-solving institution. At this level, there is no legal requirement for establishing the LECs, but it is desirable to have them for practical reasons. Whether they are part of the LC committees is interpreted differently. NEMA explained that they are. In Mukono it appears that they are part of the LC system (interview with Solomon Musoke, DEO Mukono District, *ibid*). But, the DEO in Rakai District mentioned that they are not. In some parts of Rakai, especially where some NGOs are active, this kind of committees has been formed. (interview with Frederic Muhumuza, DEO Rakai District, 5 July 2000).

Consequently, the exact structure of the committees is shaped differently in different districts. But what is more important is that the structure of decentralized environmental initiatives is now in place. The real question, then, is how to turn the newly created structure into effective practice.

4. Environmental Management at Local Levels

4-1 Achievements

Each district, under the leadership of DEC, is required to prepare several policy related documents. The first one is called District State of Environment Report (DSER), which presents situation

⁷ 51 out of 56 districts have DEOs (interview with Margaret Lwaga, District Support Coordinator, NEMA, 31 July 2002).

analyses of environmental issues in each district. This report is to be revised in every three years. The second is District Environmental Profile (DEP) which is more detailed than DSER. The DEP would guide each local authority, particularly district government, to prepare action plans for remedial actions. The districts need to establish District Environmental Action Plan, which in turn feeds into the preparation of District Development Plan (DDP), which is the overall plan for districts (interview with Fortunate Sewankambo, Director, Policy Planning and Legal Division, NEMA, 2 August 1998). Planning process as well as outcomes of the DDP need to integrate environmental concerns, as mandated by the National Environmental Statute, 1995.

The actual degree of preparation of these documents varies considerably from one district to another. As of the mid 2000, 39 out of 45 districts have compiled DSER, and it was anticipated that by the end of 2001 all districts would have completed it (interview with Fortunate Sewankambo, Director, Policy Planning and Legal Division, NEMA, 30 August 2000). For DEP, as of 1998, 16 districts have completed this exercise (interview with Fortunate Sewankambo, Director, Policy Planning and Legal Division, NEMA, 2 August 1998).

There are several reasons for this variation. First, in districts where the DEOs are reasonably dedicated, the degree of document preparation is advanced than other places. This means that progress in this area depends more on personality and dedication than on structures and regulations. Second, it is crucial to secure donor's support in order for planning process to be implemented, particularly because all local governments are in dire shortage of funds. In Tororo District, the DEO is assisted by the World Bank financed project. He remarked that "participatory" consultation to review a range of environmental issues was conducted to solicit views of the grassroots people. Some sub-county offices carried out action planning to tackle environmental issues. This process contributed, as he argued, to enhance the ownership of resource management (interview with Joshua Esiepet, DEO Tororo District, 30 May 2000).

To rectify this situation, NEMA started to provide financial assistance to about half of all districts in FY 2001/02. In seven districts, additional support was provided to carry out participatory environmental planning, and the funds are to be used for training facilitators at the grassroots level (interview with Margaret Lwaga, District Support Coordinator, NEMA, 31 July 2002).

Moreover, in Tororo, with the project support, some efforts were also made to integrate environmental issues in school activities. The DEO has attempted to sensitize head masters of schools on environment, and in some places there are coordinators who organize environmental related activities in collaboration with head masters. For instance, in Kidoko Primary School, tree planting and cleaning school facilities have been carried out (interview with Margaret Okapes, Head Teacher, 1 June 2000).

4-2 Remaining Problems

Although these achievements are considered quite impressive in developing countries, several key obstacles also remain.

Political will

Before decentralization processes begun, environmental management were largely in the hands of civil service staff who belonged to ministries in the capital. Decentralization has now changed the way in which accountability is ensured. Local civil service staff are now answerable to local political leaders, who are in turn held accountable to constituencies. Thus, “[t]he role of local politicians in community conservation is growing, and at both local and national levels they are forcing issues, particularly in relation to the balance between conservation and rural livelihood objectives” (Barrow et al., 2000, p. 141).⁸

It was pointed out that the degree of awareness among councillors on environmental issues has been improving. For instance, recently global weather patterns have become unstable, which has affected Uganda significantly as well. Plastic bags have also become garbage in many localities. These issues are quite familiar to the councillors (interview with Frederic Muhumuza, DEO Rakai District, 5 July 2000). Nonetheless, for most of the councillors, environment is not a priority issue. They place more values on “development” than “environment” given the pervasive rural poverty in Uganda. Political calculation also tends to guide them to prefer activities which bear short-term rather than long-term results. Environment is difficult to show results in short term (Robert Nabanyumya, National Project Manager, Cross Boarder Biodiversity Project, 24 July 2000).⁹

Bureaucratic resistance

Conservation bureaucracies has operated for a long time in a very top-down fashion. Thus, introducing the new idea of community conservation has never been easy. Indeed for them it has been a “bitter pill to swallow” (Hulme and Murphree, 2001a, pp. 107 and 282). This kind of bureaucratic resistance to appreciate participation of local stakeholders has been one of the major bottlenecks to translate the community conservation approach into practice (Barrow et al., 2000, p. 137).

Financial (mis)allocations

The combination of political unwillingness and bureaucratic resistance has undoubtedly contributed

⁸ See also Raussen et al., 2001, p. 468.

⁹ For example, it is reported that in Mukono when a project assisted by the United Nations Capital Development Fund started in 1998, DEO wanted to use the fund for environmental activities such as tree planting, but the district decided to use the fund for other purposes (interview with Solomon Musoke, DEO Mukono District, 16 August 1999).

Another interesting statement is quoted in Namara et al. (2001): “Sub-county councillors do not prioritise environment issues. Most council members do not understand environment issues, therefore they do not support them to get significant budget votes. In my sub-county, the chairman of the council also avoids appointing people who can reason and plan well, because he wants people he can easily manipulate. Budgeting is done only by the sub-county chief and cashier, of course in consultation with the sub-county chairman. During budgeting, they make sure most budget votes are allocated to sectors where they can easily draw on them, like transport and entertainment. Some sectoral committees are given so little that they rarely meet. Councillors are politicians, but not good planners. They do not understand some issues (CPAC Chairman, Kayonza, April 2001).”

to the shortage of resources being allocated to environmental activities, particularly at local levels. Although data is not available for comparative analyses, sporadic evidence shows that environment is not the area in which funds are coming to be allocated increasingly.

This lack of adequate resources has created a situation whereby activities can be implemented when donors are found. This means that donor-driven activities tend to receive priorities than local initiatives. This reality presents a critical challenge of making devolution work in financially poor situations.

Available personnel

Several improvements are made in providing required personnel in environmental activities. For instance, one DEO in each district may be a significant step forward. But this allocation of human resources is clearly inadequate to reverse the deteriorating environmental situation of all sorts. There is no specially designated civil service staff in charge of environment at sub-county level. This situation needs to be rectified if environmental actions deserve serious attention for implementation.

Institutional confusion

Even if significant degree of decentralization has been implemented in Uganda, central authorities still retain important controls over environmental regulations, particularly when they are related to national parks and forest and game reserves.¹⁰ The main problem is to secure institutional links between these central authorities and the LC system.

Even if there has been some attempts to promote collaboration between conservation authorities and the LC system, there has not been no clear link established between those two. Thus, quite often collaboration is based on personal ties rather than institutional arrangements. This situation puts local management committees on environmental issues, especially those which are asked to be in charge of national parks and state owned game reserves, in an uncertain position (Barrow et al., 2000. p. 91).

In addition, the Land Act, 1998, assigns some important responsibilities to the LC system, especially district governments. Each district is now requested to establish its District Land Board, whose functions include allocation of land which is not owned by anybody; facilitation of registration and transfer of lands; and establishment of land record (Section 60 of the Act). The board should be filled by five members. However, in many districts the boards are either not fully manned or have become a target for political contentions. Thus, the assessment over the performance of the boards is mixed at best.¹¹

¹⁰ The Uganda Wildlife Statute, 1996 contributed to set up the Uganda Wildlife Authority (UWA) (that was created by the merger of former Uganda National Parks and the Game Department of the Ministry of Tourism and Wildlife).

¹¹ The issue of land tenure is crucial for effective conservation and development policies (Concern Worldwide et al., 1999). For the poor when "one has land, one has life" (Uganda, MoFPED, 2000, p.

As a result, the kind of integration envisaged between DDP and various environmental reports at local levels is seldom attained in reality (interview with Solomon Musoke, DEO Mukono District, 18 May 2000).

While this localization and decentralisation is positive, the environment is still a low priority for most local authorities and districts compared with health, education and rural livelihoods. The link between the environment and the well being of rural people is still not clear, as it is not directly related to rural livelihoods. Such short term perspectives have led to potentially unwise decisions on the use of natural resources, for instance with respect to forest settlement, construction of dams and large irrigation schemes (Barrow et al., 2000, p. 15).¹²

5. Collaboration / collective action

There are, nonetheless, some examples by which grassroots people collaborate in organizing environmental activities. Some of them have been facilitated by the LC system and others have not. It is useful to adopt a typology to classify community conservation activities into three types (Barrow, et al., 2000, pp. 38-42; Hulme and Murphree, 2001a chapter 3). The basic standpoint for this typology is that “[c]ommunity conservation cannot be simply analysed in the context of levels of participation. Participation has to be related to resource ownership and access, and is thus a tool and not a panacea, albeit a vital one, for responsible conservation” (Barrow et al., 2000, p. 37).

Table 1.

5-1 Protected Area Outreach

This type of activities is to preserve fragile ecosystems and biodiversity by designating the habitat areas as national parks and game reserves, which are normally brought under state ownership. The state agencies determine resource management and decide required activities. This type of activities has been common in East Africa.

In Uganda, management of Lake Mburo National Park (LMNP) is one such example. The LMNP is the first park in Uganda to employ community conservation wardens and rangers in 1991 (Hulme

45). The implementation process of the Land Act should be carried out with utmost care in order to ensure that the poor and the marginalized can participate in local consultation and decision-making process over the allocation of the land. Land rights issues vary tremendously from one area to another. See also Bruce, 1998; and Place et al., 2001 for more details.

¹² Lind and Cappon (2001) points out that: “Although district and local environmental committees formulate their own natural resource policies and plans, these are to be developed in conformity with key principles of environmental management, including the need to use natural resources sustainably, and for district environmental management plans to target areas needing “special” assistance to ensure resources are used sustainably. The establishment of new locally based institutions for environmental management more often limits actors in managing their environments rather than promoting their liberty.”

and Infield, 2001, p. 107). The LMNP borders with 13 parishes with an estimated population of more than 80,000 (ibid, p. 111). With various donors' assistance, efforts have been made to install an institutional mechanism for reflecting community concerns. Park Management Advisory Committee and Parish Resource Management Committees were established. Through the committees' consultation, relations between the Park and local communities have improved. Small-scale development activities have been carried out, mostly in the form of social infrastructure such as schools, health clinics and trading centers (interviews with Christopher Musumba and Matovu Mutwalibi, LMNP, 7 August 2002). While these are tangible benefits for local residents, the estimated benefit of US\$ 2.3 per person per annum is far below the costs for wildlife conservation (ibid, p. 122; Barrow et al., 2000, pp. 126-8). The distribution of these benefits within and between local communities has not been totally fair either. Although income generating activities have also been initiated, many of them have tended economically unviable partly due to the very fact that the park surrounding areas are economically unattractive for business activities. Furthermore, while illegal activities of damaging wildlife within the park appears to be decreased, sustainable biodiversity conservation still requires much further efforts particularly outside of the park areas since the park itself is not "a self-contained" ecological zone (Kangwana, 2001).

5-2 Collaborative Management

Collaborative management seeks to forge agreements between local resource users and conservation authorities for negotiated access to natural resources, which are usually under the control of statutory authority. For land, complex arrangements for tenure and ownership are sometimes made. Through this kind of agreements, the objectives of conservation with some rural livelihood benefits are sought.

There are some examples of this approach in Uganda, including the involvement of the Uganda Wildlife Authority (UWA) in Bwindi Impenetrable Forest National Park, Mt. Elgon National Park; Rwenzori Mountains National Park (Barrow et al., 2000, pp. 50-56; Namara et al., 2001); and Mgahinga Gorilla National Park (Adams and Infield, 2003; Infield and Adams, 1999; Wild and Mutebi, 1996).¹³ These examples generate some lessons. The activities are all assisted by international NGOs which are keenly interested in environmental issues. The projects usually involved in setting-up local users groups and identifying key resources to which local populations would like to maintain their access. Negotiation process has evolved to reach an agreement with the UWA. This process normally improves the relations between the authorities and resource users. But sometimes such agreements do not fully reflect genuine support of both sides, which makes implementation difficult. Also monitoring mechanisms are often not adequately addressed in the agreements, which has sometimes caused unfair distribution of some resources to those who are not a part of the agreement. Benefits that communities receive do not compensate for actual and potential costs for conservation (Hulme and Murphree, 2001a; Infield and Adams, 1999).

¹³ In addition, "Uganda has the most advanced and coherent wetlands programme in the region. The policy actively acknowledges the important role of rural people and communities in wetland management" (Barrow et al., 2000, p. 53). See for the web site of www.ugandawetland.org.

Of particular interest is that UWA was required by the Uganda Wildlife Statute, 1996, to share 20% of the entry fees with local governments for developing communities surrounding the protected areas (Barrow et al., 2000, p. 24; Barrow et al., 2001b, p. 65; Hulme and Infield, 2001, p. 107). This sharing arrangement is one of the most innovative practices in the African continent. But the loophole in the Statute allows the UWA to “leave its ‘informal policy’ on resource access unimplemented” (Barrow et al., 2000, p. 50).

5-3 Community-based Conservation

Community-based conservation seeks to achieve both sustainable uses of natural resources and adequate conservation practices through devolving control over those resources to local communities. Here, local resource users own land and resources either by de fact or de jure arrangements. For effective operation, an emphasis is placed on developing local economy. This has been in fact a common approach in Southern Africa.

In Uganda, the establishment of the LC system has been contributing this type of community-based conservation activities as well. “Inclusion of provisions for granting user rights, and the establishment of community management areas as a category of conservation area has created both the climate and the legal structures for community-based conservation” (Barrow, et a., 2000, p. 73).

The East African Cross-Border Biodiversity Project, supported by UNDP, GEF, FAO to preserve the Sango Bay forest and wetland ecosystem is considered to be another example (UNDP/GEF, 2000). With the assistance of local NGOs, collaboration with the LC system was sought. Through the process of consultation, local residents increased their awareness of conservation value. But this has achieved through supplemental activities of promoting fuel-efficient cooking devices and income generating activities (interview John Magalula, IRDI staff, 26 July 2000). As a result, relations between authorities and local residents have improved. “In the past, forest officer was considered to be an enemy. But now through the collaborative forest management practices, it is no longer the case. Frequent consultations with local people have changed the relationship” (Erick Twinomugisha, Assistant Forest Officer, 28 July 2000). The forest officer continued that if local people see illegal activities to cut trees in the protected area, then they report it to the local forestry officer (also confirmed by interview with John Magalula, IRDI staff, 26 July 2000).

There are some other examples of community-based conservation. The activities are led by community-based organizations (CBOs), which often operated with support by the central government and/or international NGOs interested in promoting conservation practices, especially in areas where local governments remain inactive. Some CBOs are well organized and have been in operation for more than 5-7 years. These CBOs have a clear organization structure. Decision-making process is reasonably transparent. Benefits of group activities are shared by the members. Disputes arising from competing requirements for resources can be resolved by consultative processes.¹⁴

¹⁴ In Tororo, a group of about thirty women started to plant trees in 1998, which was subsequently assisted by the farmers association in the area. Unfortunately this example did not obtain assistance

However, while community-based conservation practices are encouraging in Uganda, this approach has yet to be adequately translated into practice and procedures, particularly in wildlife conservation. Currently, UWA appears to lack the capacity to achieve this realization (Barrow, et al., 2000, p. 76). CARE assisted Queen Elizabeth National Park Fishing Village Project includes support for community based fishing conservation (ibid, p. 74), and may come closest to this best practice. Therefore, although some improvements have been made, this community based-conservation has not yet fully proven to be effective. Some observers noted that “[c]ontinued failure to implement community-based conservation will certainly result in wildlife continuing to disappear from rural landscapes as they provide negative economic returns to land users” (Barrow et al., 2000, p. 76).

6. Key Issues toward Effective Local Management

In each type of activities, the record is mixed with some successes and failures. As a result, it was reported that “community conservation, as it is recognized in Uganda today, has not been developed in an integrated manner, rather through a combination of park specific activities, supported by donor and NGO funded projects, and the attempts, sometimes, ill judged, of the conservation authorities to respond to political pressure to meet legitimate needs of rural communities” (Barrow et al., 2000, p. 22). The following issues call urgent attention to enhance integrity of community conservation.

In the words of a Chairperson of a national park in Uganda:

We are given responsibilities, but no authority. For example, park staff prefer to handle cases of conflict between them and the people by themselves. Communities now know that the management of the park has changed to become pro-people. However the park staff still prefer to use force, especially the junior staff who do not seem to be fully aware of the changing style of management of parks (Interview with a Chairman, March 2001, Kabale, quoted in Namara et al., 2001, p. 38).

6-1 Locality vs. national coordination

At the grassroots level, people discuss their local environmental issues such as water shortage and forest conservation/usage, often at LC meetings. But successful countermeasures to combat these problems are usually beyond the scope and capacity of one locality.

For example, in Tororo, it was reported that a restriction of tree cutting was imposed, because many trees were cut for charcoal burning. Then those who still needed trees went for a neighboring district for tree cutting. Unless, regulations are nationally coordinated, this kind of local initiative, no matter how useful they can be, cannot be effectively enforced (Joshua Esiepet, DEO Tororo, 9 August 2000). “The fact that more than one district may have interests in a particular protected area means that the LC structure as it stands cannot meet all the needs of an institution for dealing

from the LC system (interview in Rubongi, Tororo, 31 May 2000).

with protected area and community issues” (Barrow et al., 2000, p. 90). Even a large and resourceful district alone cannot resolve this kind of issues effectively without adequate national support.

Even though national support is indispensable, it should by no means an imposition of central views on local authorities. Tension between conditional and unconditional grants as a means of inter-governmental fiscal transfer is relevant here. The central government may consider conditional grants necessary in view of the low priority given to environment by local political leaders. The conditional grants secure that certain amounts of funds are used by local governments for environmental activities. But unilateral imposition without dialogues would harm the central-local relations. Unilateral decision by central government, furthermore, contradicts the rationale of granting autonomy to local governments. Therefore, what is fundamental is a need for open and sincere dialogue between national and local leaders on how important environment is after all given the unmistakable fact that precious financial resource should be used wisely and effectively.

This raises a more fundamental issue of balancing environment and development. Although at the level of rhetoric, many governments including the NRM in Uganda acknowledge that conservation is important. However, this acknowledgement has not yet been translated into practice. In many sectoral policies, especially in agriculture and livestock, the governments persistently favor development over environment in such form as subsidies (Emerton, 2001). This results in a situation whereby conservation does in fact receive disincentives by government actions. If environmental issues are truly critical for sustainable development, urgent attention is needed to readdress the current situation.

6-2 Incentive and the Free Rider Issue

In comparison with other sectors such as education and health, environment encompasses a wide range of stakeholders whose interests and concerns are so diversified and thus difficult to establish a congruent consensus. If it is health or education, local management of facilities may be considered more practical. Improvements of local schools and health clinics made possible by local contribution can enhance educational and health standards of local population.

But in the case of environment, resources can be located locally, but the stakeholders of the resources are not necessarily local. Quite often benefits from conservation are distributed more to those who do not reside close to natural resources and less to local residents. In contrast, it is the local residents who bear most of the conservation costs (Emerton, 2001). As long as this kind of asymmetrical relation of cost and benefit distribution persists, there is little incentive to collaborate with conservation.¹⁵

Of particular concern to community conservation is the extent to which [the benefits that

¹⁵ Uganda’s well-known participatory poverty study noted that although natural resources, including forests, were considered as a potential source of revenue through tourism, the current poor state of national parks and game reserves was seen as a “wasting opportunity to generate local revenue” (Uganda, MoFPED, 2000, p. 48).

accrue from conservation] reach the local people living near or in a conservation area, and whether they are proportional to, or accrue in a form which can offset the 'costs' incurred by conservation areas.... All too often the bulk of wildlife benefits accrue externally; to national or international firms and companies or to foreign tourists; not to the people who live with wildlife on a day-to-day basis, and suffer economic costs and losses as a result. Many wildlife options and existence values will be received by the global community and future generations (Barrow, et al., 2000, p. 113).

Unless there is a substantive progress for more symmetrical relations of cost-benefit distribution, there is little incentive for negotiating collaborative management (Olson, 1992, p. viii; Ostrom, 1990). Those who benefit from resource consumptions should bear a substantive part of cost of resource conservation.

The situations is nicely summarized as follows:

People will not willingly take on duties where there is no personal gain (remuneration, allowances). Personal gain motivates people, and lack of it leads to dormancy. Environment protection is not well understood by local government representatives. Councillors often ask, "what income does the environment generate?" Politicians will mainly budget for issues they understand well, or issues in which they have interest like road construction, which show immediate results (District Environment Officer, Kabale, March 2001, quoted in Namara et al., 2001, p. 49).¹⁶

In addition, the ways in which costs and benefits are distributed also become crucial in sustaining appropriate management of resources (Dubois and Lowore, 2000). It should be remembered that "unless the benefits are equitably negotiated, and dividends accrue in a mutually transparent fashion, then this is not a true partnership" (Barrow, et al., 2000, p. 72). There has been some progress in this area. Reduced hostility by local people toward conservation personnel has enabled to foster more trustful relations between residents and officials. In such cases, it has increased possibilities where conservation authorities can operate (Hulme and Murphree, 2001c, p. 282). This improvement certainly presents possibilities for partnership formations.

Furthermore, natural resources are so precious that the fee rider problem is eminent; the temptation for personal consumption at the cost of community in large is significant. Thus, decentralization alone would not be able to foster local cohesiveness for establishing consensus on how to establish a delicate balance between consumption and conservation. Local communities need to be capable for sanctioning undesirable misuses of resources while encouraging appropriate practices of utilization. "The ability of community institutions to exert effective sanctions over individual behaviour is a crucial requirement for successful resource access programmes" (Barrow et al., 2000, p. 139).

¹⁶ On the other hand, Uganda Community Tourism Association (UCOTA) is an interesting example in attempting to increase possibilities of community benefits from pro-poor tourism. See Williams et al (2001).

6-3 Information Dissemination

Grassroots people are not informed of functions and responsibilities of different agencies and offices involved in resource management. It is thus essential that each stakeholders understand their role in respect to others. What is alarming is that very few understand that local government activities are relevant for their efforts of sustainable use of limited natural resources. Many grassroots poor tend to have very limited sources to obtain accurate information which affect their day-to-day survival strategies.

This issue presents a crucial dilemma of information dissemination. On the one hand, certain information needs to be provided by officials and leaders to ordinary people. On the other hand, the powerful may exploit the opportunity for their benefits at the cost of the powerless. As well captured, “individuals, groups and organizations compete to manipulate both the meaning that is invested in the term and the nature of its practice so as to achieve their personal, group or organizational goals” (Hulme and Murphree, 2001b, p. 5). Information, thus, plays a central role in achieving collaborative efforts for sustainable resource management (Olson, 1992; Sandler, 1992).

There are, however, some reasons for not totally pessimistic on this issue. First, environment was a “community affair” in Uganda as well long before the government announced it publicly. “African societies developed deep and many-faced bodies of knowledge about their local environment” (Beinart, 2000, p. 289).

[M]any Africans have long practised ‘community conservation’ without state or foreign aid. The intrinsic values that rural people hold for their environment are a cultural resource which is often ignored, or undermined, by external researchers and consultants whose personal values and academic training may head them to believe that rural people see species and habitats purely in utilitarian terms (Hulme and Murphree, 2001b, p. 6).

Second, there are increasing efforts to forge networks of groups and associations, including women’s groups and farmers’ associations. Information may be shared and disseminated through these networks. The multiplicity of networks prevents some from monopolizing or distorting information for their own benefits. Even though this issue is not fully well researched, generally it appears that open and multiple channels of networks are more effective than closed and isolated ones (Long, 2001).

While knowledge is context specific, it is still possible to share it with others. What is critical is a particular way in which knowledge is shaped in social interactions (Keeley and Scoons, 2003). Even though there may be a tendency for the dominant to influence on this process of sharing experiences and relevant information, horizontal interactions between similar associations and groups pose more chances for effective learning than unilateral dissemination of knowledge in a top-down manner. Therefore it would become critical to develop adaptable and embedded networks to encourage reflective learning.

6-4 Conflict management

Conflict management is indispensable for ensuring that development processes are sustainable (Concern Worldwide et al., 1999). Conflicts can take various forms: debate, contest, dispute, disagreement, turmoil, and a state of unrest. The more the resources are precious, the more likely that there will be some conflicts. The development activities also present chances for some to maneuver in order to obtain a larger share. It is therefore critical to see conflict as a part of larger transformative processes rather than see it as something to be avoided (Carley and Christie, 2000; Warner, 2001).

This is particularly so because communities are neither homogenous nor monolithic (Lind and Cappon, 2001). Even within a very small village, the types of resources are quite diverse ranging from land, trees, birds, animals, herbs to fishes. The stakeholders who use them for their day-to-day survival as well as for commercial profits are at odds with the conservation advocates.

Thus, taking conflicts more positively, conflicts do in fact provide new opportunities for initiating more innovative attempts to balance resource uses and conservation (Carley and Christie, 2000, pp. 164-6; Dubois and Lowore, 2000). To facilitate innovation, consensus-building approach is most effective since it intends to facilitate positive-sum agreements between contesting stakeholders by widening people's understanding of their own and contenders' interests and aspirations. Its process also encourages them to think beyond entrenched and emotional positions (Warner, 2001). The issue of incentives and information are related to conflict management. The congruence between distribution of cost and benefits would reduce the possibilities of conflict. Likewise, widely available information related to resource use reduces mutual distrust among stakeholders.

What is important is to ensure that alternative sources for income and daily necessities need to be provided especially for the poor (interview John Magalula, IRDI staff, 26 July 2000). The poor are dependent on few sources for daily survival. Diversifying the sources and thereby reducing the pressure on resource consumption is critical. Here there is a role for NGOs which has generally more supportive to facilitate the needs of the marginalized, although NGOs per se would not necessarily be suitable for this kind of support. Informal and nested networks become once again crucial for sharing innovative activities with other grassroots groups facing similar issues.

7. Conclusions

It is evident from the three types of community conservation that one institutional mechanism would not fit all. There will continue to be a variety of natural resource management forms in which different degrees of centralization and decentralization are observed. Some national parks and game reserves will remain under the central control although their operations would be modified reflecting lessons of more "participatory" activities. Clearly, community management cannot be an effective envelope in which all kinds of environmental crises can be contained (Holling, 1995).

In order for the poor and the marginalized to be included in conservation practices as equal partners

with more powerful stakeholders, they need to be motivated for being engaged in such community activities. Often tangible and intangible benefits work as such kind of incentive. When such incentive is absent, groups tend to become idle. But this presents a very difficult situation, which is fundamentally a chicken and egg type of question. People need to be organized for overcoming the vicious cycle of poverty and environmental degradation. On the other hand, precisely because they are trapped in the vicious cycle, they do not receive sufficient benefits from conservation, and therefore they are not motivated for being engaged in such activities.

This observation yields three conclusions. First, with decentralization, coordination between national agencies/ministries and local governments becomes more important. Effective reform efforts need to be more coherent. This coordination requirements enhances the role of the state, but does not mean that the state should return to the old style of authoritarian “fortress conservation” management. The state, instead, is required to fulfill the more important role of coordination differently than before. The state is asked to transform itself in order to become partners with the private sector, NGOs, local resource users and other stakeholders.

Second, it becomes crucial to overcome various forms of dichotomy: central vs. local; foreign vs. indigenous; and top-down vs. bottom-up. The process of partnership building should go beyond these various forms of dichotomy. Relevant and effective solutions have multiple trajectories which can be interpreted differently by different stakeholders. What is essential is to increase the scope in which coherent and congruent actions by many actors can be pursued.

Third, this applies to the nature of knowledge related to African environment. A superficial dichotomy between Western science and African local knowledge also requires modification. “While there were encounters characterized by mutual incomprehension, systems of knowledge have often porous and plural over a long period of time.”(Beinart, 2000, pp. 292-293). What is essential is reflective and adaptable learning. As Western experts can learn from indigenous experiments in Africa, so do Africans can learn from various types of foreign technology. Mutual reflections seem to be almost the only step forward on the African continent whose recent history was shaded by colonial imposition of certain types of knowledge over others.

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Table 1

	Protected Area Outreach	Collaborative Management	Community-based Conservation
Objectives	Conservation of ecosystems, biodiversity and species. No emphasis on rural livelihood development.	Conservation with limited rural livelihood development.	Sustainable rural livelihood development.
Leadership	The state	The state with the recognition that community- resource users as a stakeholder.	Community-level resource users.
Ownership	State owns land and resources through national parks and game reserves.	State ownership with complex arrangement for collaborative management.	Local resource users own land and resources by either de facto or de jure arrangement.
Management	State determines all management activities.	Decisions are made through agreements between the state and resource users.	Decisions are made by resource users with or without assistance by the state.
Centralization	Centralized control by the state	Moderate centralization by the state with limited participation by resource users.	Decentralized governance led by community resource users.
Assumption	The state, supported by science, needs to regulate because resource users are trouble-makers.	It is useful to reflect local knowledge within the overall dominance of scientific knowledge.	Resource users are knowledgeable about local environment.

Source: Barrow et al., 2000, p. 40; Dubois and Lowore , 2000, p. 8; Hulme and Murphree, 2001, p. 32.