



REGISTRATION OF TITLES ACT

Certificate of Title

FREEHOLD REGISTER, VOLUME HQT123 FOLIO 12

DESCRIPTION OF LAND

ALL THIS piece of land delineated and edged red on the plan hereto annexed containing the following area or thereabouts and situate as follows:

Investigative Research on the Extent of Encroachment and Issuance of Land Titles within Central and Local Forest Reserves

The case of Wakiso, Mpigi, Kayunga, Kikuube, Buhweju, Mitooma, Bushenyi, Rubirizi, and Hoima districts.



**Anti
Corruption
Coalition
Uganda**

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Executive Summary

This investigative research examines the extent of encroachment and the issuance of land titles within central and local forest reserves in nine districts of Uganda: Wakiso, Mpigi, Kayunga, Kikuube, Buhweju, Mitooma, Bushenyi, Rubirizi, and Hoima. These districts are located in the Lake Shore Range (Kayunga, Wakiso, and Mpigi), South Western Range (Rubirizi, Bushenyi, Mitooma, and Buhweju), and Budongo Ecosystem Range (Kikuube and Hoima), which are management units within the National Forestry Authority. The study aims to uncover the underlying factors contributing to illegal land activities, and their impact on forest conservation, and recommend measures for improved governance and enforcement.

Significant encroachment has been identified in areas under tree-growing permits and licenses in the surveyed districts, with the most severe cases reported in the Lake Shore Range (Mpigi, Wakiso), and Kikuube districts in the Budongo Systems Range. Forest lands have been cleared for agricultural activities, residential developments, and commercial enterprises.

There are multiple cases of land title issuances, and there are those lined up for issuance that are often facilitated by corrupt officials within land management, the military, district local government offices, and the Area Land Committees at sub-county levels. In some instances, land titles are issued without proper verification, and there are cases where forest land was fraudulently reclassified as private land. There are cases where land was classified as customary land belonging to the Bunyoro-Kitara Kingdom. A significant number of illegal land titles were traced back to influential individuals and entities exploiting legal loopholes. To date, it has become difficult to identify the illegal land titles since the NFA started nullifying and canceling them, once found.

The issue of land titles within forest reserves (FRs) is a significant challenge to forest conservation and sustainable land management. With over 703 land titles reportedly found within forest reserves, and 609 in various parts of the country verified so far, it highlights serious systemic weaknesses in the land management and verification process. Land titles in forest reserves typically only surface when there are issues, such as conflicts over land use. The following land titles have so far been identified, with details of many of them still to be dug out.

Table 1: Summary of available land titles in the reserves

Range	Districts sampled	Name of the reserve	Size of the reserve	Number of claimants of illegal titles	Acreage of illegal titles	Acreage of encroachment
Budongo Ecosystem Range	Hoima	Mpanga CFR	544	1	Unknown	Unknown
		Kyahaiguru	422	1	Unknown	Unknown
		Mukihani	3,619	1	Unknown	Unknown

		Ibamba	313	Several	Unknown	The reserve is in the city division
		Kandanda-Ngobye	2556	4		
	Kikuube	Bugoma CFR	41,144	22	Over 10,000 hectares	Estimated at 30%
South Western Range	Bushenyi	Kyamuhunga LFR	10	2	9 ha	90% encroached
	Mitooma	No land titles				
	Buhweju	No land titles				
	Mbarara	Mbarara Plantation	Not known	1		About 60 acres are now occupied by illegal titles.
Lakeshore range	Wakiso	Kajjansi	297	Several		100% encroached
		Kalandazi	458	Several		15% encroached
		Kalangalo	337	Several		40% occupied by a marine PGB, Artillery & SFC barracks
		Kanjaza	332	5 (suspected plots with titles)		15% one permanent and one semi-permanent building
		Kyewaga	209	Several		10% of the reserve with permanent buildings
		Kitubulu	80	9 titles	47 hectares	20% permanent buildings, the land site at Guda
		Walumwanyani	399	1		10% there is a person claiming 6 ha of CFR land
		Gunda LFR	57			30 hectares being cultivable, encroachment by a person with the recommendation of RDC

The encroachment (by collaborative forest management groups and tree planting permits and licenses) and illegal land titling have led to substantial deforestation and degradation of forest ecosystems, loss of biodiversity, and disruption of local climate regulation in the districts studied, especially so in Kyewaga and Kitubulu forest reserves in Wakiso districts. Water catchment areas have been compromised, affecting water supply and quality for surrounding communities. Degradation and deforestation have heightened vulnerability to soil erosion in areas like the Wakiso district, along the shoreline of Lake Victoria.

The recommendation includes the need to engage the **Parliamentary Committee on Natural Resources** to address the critical challenges of land titles, encroachment stemming from the issuance of tree planting licenses, and illegal activities arising from **Collaborative Forest Management (CFM)** practices. There is also a need to engage physical planning bodies, especially the District Land Boards and Area Land Committees, which are key in issuing land titles. The Area Land Committee should have a representative with higher integrity, a forester, or a person who

has forestry at heart. Judges should only conclude the cases upon visiting the disputed parcels of land in a forest reserve. And, the cancellation of titles should be effected, including deleting such titles in the database or system, to prevent unsuspecting buyers from falling into the trap.

In conclusion, the encroachment and issuance of land titles within central and local forest reserves in the surveyed districts pose a significant threat to forest conservation and sustainable development. Addressing these challenges requires a multi-faceted approach involving strengthened governance, community engagement, legal reforms, and active restoration efforts. By implementing the recommended measures, it is possible to safeguard Uganda's forest reserves and ensure their benefits for future generations.

I. Introduction

I.1 Background and rationale of the study

The Central and Local Forest Reserves in Uganda play a vital role in maintaining ecological balance (climate regulation, water cycle regulation, soil health, air quality improvement, support for agriculture, water quality maintenance, and cultural and recreational value among others). Forests such as Mabira, Bugoma, and Budongo Central Forest Reserves host over 300 bird species, numerous primates such as chimpanzees, and diverse plant life which accounts for supporting biodiversity (habitat provision, endangered and endemic species, genetic diversity, microhabitats, conservation areas, ecological processes such as nutrient cycling), and providing essential resource products and services (such as timber and wood products, Non-Timber Forest Products (NTFPs), wildlife and genetic resources, water regulation, soil conservation, economic benefits among others) for local community consumption and use.

One of the challenges that development has caused to forests is to eliminate forests to pave the way for urban development. Many Local Forest Reserves have faced this change, being encroached on or degazetted for settlement. While urban expansion and infrastructure development are important for economic growth and improving living standards, the long-term environmental, social, and financial consequences of destroying forests outweigh the short-term gains. Currently, Uganda has joined the rest of the world in developing green cities, that will support biodiversity, support ecosystem services, climate change, and carbon sequestration. It is incumbent upon the Ministries Department and Agencies, with the guidance of the National Forestry Authority, and the District Forestry Services to make sure we maintain a permanent forest estate in Uganda.

Despite their importance, these forests are increasingly threatened by encroachment, the issuance of land titles in both central and local forest reserves, tree planting permits that promote monocultures, and Collaborative Forest Management (CFM) arrangements that are greatly manipulated and do not deliver on their intentions. Encroachment (which involves illegal and unpermitted settlement, agriculture, or development activities within forest reserves and protected areas) has resulted in the clearing of forest reserve land for settlement and agriculture which reduces forest cover.

Encroachment disrupts habitats, leading to the decline or extinction of plant and animal species. It also enhances the removal of vegetation cover which increases soil erosion and degradation, impacts the water cycle, reducing rainfall and water availability. In addition, it escalates environmental crime and heightens conflicts and gender-based crimes. It also causes economic losses exemplified by loss of agricultural yield due to reduced rainfall and escalated droughts. Therefore, loss of forest cover carries ecological, social, and economic impacts.

The issuance of land titles (that leads to the unauthorized allocation of forest land to individuals or entities), often facilitated by corrupt practices, leads to forest land grabbing for agriculture, urban development, or other private uses. In addition, land titling and permits often lead to conflicts between communities, private landowners, and conservation authorities such as the National Forestry Authority and the District Local Governments. Legal battles and forestry law enforcement issues ensue and weaken conservation and forest protection efforts.

Permits/licenses issued for tree planting, while beneficial in some contexts, can sometimes lead to adverse effects if not properly managed. Tree planting permits can lead to the establishment of monoculture plantations, which reduce biodiversity compared to natural forests. Inappropriate tree species or planting methods can alter soil composition, water availability, and local ecosystems. Large-scale plantations may displace local communities and wildlife, leading to social and ecological consequences.

Collaborative Forest Management is meant for forest-neighboring communities to participate in local forest management, aiming to balance conservation and livelihood needs. However, if it is poorly implemented, lacks resources, and does not take care of capacity building and training, it can lead to ineffective management. Balancing the needs of conservation with community livelihood activities can create conflicts and management challenges. In some cases, CFM agreements may lead to overexploitation of forest resources if not carefully monitored and regulated.

This research aimed to investigate the extent of these issues in specific districts of Wakiso, Mpigi, Kayunga, Kikuube, Buhweju, Mitooma, Bushenyi, Rubirizi, and Hoima. These districts are grouped into NFAs management units of Lake Shore Range (Kayunga, Wakiso, and Mpigi districts), South Western Range (Bushenyi, Mitooma, Rubirizi, and Buhweju districts), and Budongo Ecosystems Range (Kikuube and Hoima Districts). Understanding these dynamics was deemed crucial for developing effective forest management strategies and ensuring sustainable land management.

1.2 Objectives of the study

The overall objective of this investigative study was to analyze the extent of encroachment arising as a result of the issuance of land titles, the issuance of permits/licenses, and handling collaborative forest management approaches within central and local forest reserves in the selected districts of Wakiso, Mpigi, Kayunga, Kikuube, Buhweju, Bushenyi, Mitooma, Rubirizi and Hoima and come up with recommendations on how to address the irregularities.

The primary objectives of this research are:

- i. To ascertain the levels of encroachment on central and local forest reserves in the aforementioned districts.

- ii. To establish and document individuals and companies that possess illegal ownership including licenses and land titles within central and local forest reserves in the aforementioned districts.
- iii. To make recommendations on streamlining the land titling process and addressing the vice of encroachment on forest reserves.

2. Methodology

2.1 Research design

A mixed-methods approach was adopted and used, combining quantitative and qualitative research methods to provide a comprehensive understanding of the issues. Key informant interviews were carried out targeting District Forest Officers (managing LFRs), Forest Supervisors (managing forest beats) Sector Managers (managing sector), and Range Managers (managing the range within which a particular district is located). These were subjected to a structured questionnaire, responding to encroachment in forest reserves in their areas of jurisdiction. It was used to gather in-depth information from Local Government Officials and forest management authorities of the National Forestry Authority. The research covered Wakiso, Mpigi, Kayunga, Kikuube, Buhweju, Mitooma, Bushenyi, Rubirizi, and Hoima districts.

Geographic Information Systems (GIS) and ARC-GIS tools were used to map and quantify the extent of land encroachment in reserves. These were used to detect changes in land cover and identify encroachment patterns.

A review of documents was done including the forest policy, legal frameworks, and previous studies related to land management and encroachment on forest reserves. Government reports, court cases, and academic publications were also reviewed.

The outcomes of the study have been the production of detailed maps depicting the level of encroachments in the forest reserves. The study also provides examples of land grabbing in forest reserves, with land titles, and comes up with policy and management recommendations to address the identified issues.

2.2 Previous studies related to land management and encroachment on forest reserves

Studies have been carried out by different entities on the subject of the extent of encroachment and the issuance of land titles within central and local forest reserves in Uganda. The National Forestry Authority has published reports that include data and analysis on encroachment and illegal activities within forest reserves. They highlight the challenges of managing forest reserves and provide statistics on the extent of encroachment. They carried out reviews of the forestry sector and discussed encroachment and the impacts of illegal land titles on forest conservation.

The Ministry of Water and Environment has reports that provide an overview of environmental issues, including deforestation and forest degradation due to encroachment and illegal land titles publicized under the Reduction of Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation (REDD+). Research studies and academic papers have explored the socio-economic and environmental impacts of encroachment in forest reserves. These studies often include case studies from specific forest reserves.

Non-government organizations like the Environmental Alert, Uganda Wildlife Society, Tree Talk Plus, Wildlife Conservation Society, Care International in Uganda, Anti-Corruption Coalition of Uganda, and World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) have published reports on the state of forest reserves, highlighting issues related to encroachment and illegal land titles. The Forestry Resources Conservation and Management Program (FRCMP), under the Saw Log Production Grant Scheme (SPGS), produced reports on forest management challenges, including encroachment and illegal land titles. These provided historical and current data and information that was leveraged in this study.

2.3 Limitations of the study

The major limitations of this study were:

- i. The forest sector is currently secretive, there is fear and intimidation by government officials who are indulged in land grabbing.
- ii. Because of the limitation of time, the research was unable to interview resource user groups to respond to the ideas of the officers. Nonetheless, their sentiments and views were responded to by the district's forest officers, who are responsible for providing extension services to different user groups.

3. Level of encroachment on central and local forest reserves

This section aims to illustrate the level of encroachment in central and local forest reserves regarding the issuance of tree permits and licenses in forest reserves, collaborative forest management initiatives, and the issuance of illegal land titles in forest reserves. It also includes encroachments arising from eco-tourism, mining, and areas under military occupancy.

3.1 General encroachment in central and local forest reserves

Overall, there is a reduction in encroachment in central forest reserves in the districts of Kayunga, Hoima, Kikuube, Mpigi, Wakiso, and Bushenyi districts. This is attributed to the uptake and implementation of tree planting permits and licenses managed by the National Forestry Authority. These are represented in Maps 1 to 4 here under and Table 1 depicts the decrease. Despite the decrease in encroachment, there are cases of illegalities in areas where permits were issued such as agriculture, sand mining, and illegal grazing.

Table 2: Decrease in encroachment in forest reserves from 1990 to 2021

Districts	Encroachment in Forest Reserves (Area in Hectares)	
	1990 – 2010	2010 - 2021
Kayunga	2,108	722
Hoima and Kikube	5,452	3,511
Mpigi	8,127	2,728
Wakiso	1,335	1,255
Bushenyi	1,670	1,210

Source: Results of the study based on encroachment between 1990-2010 and 2010-2021

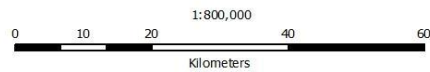
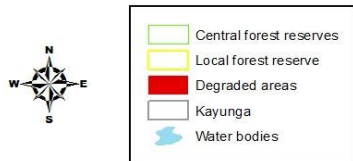
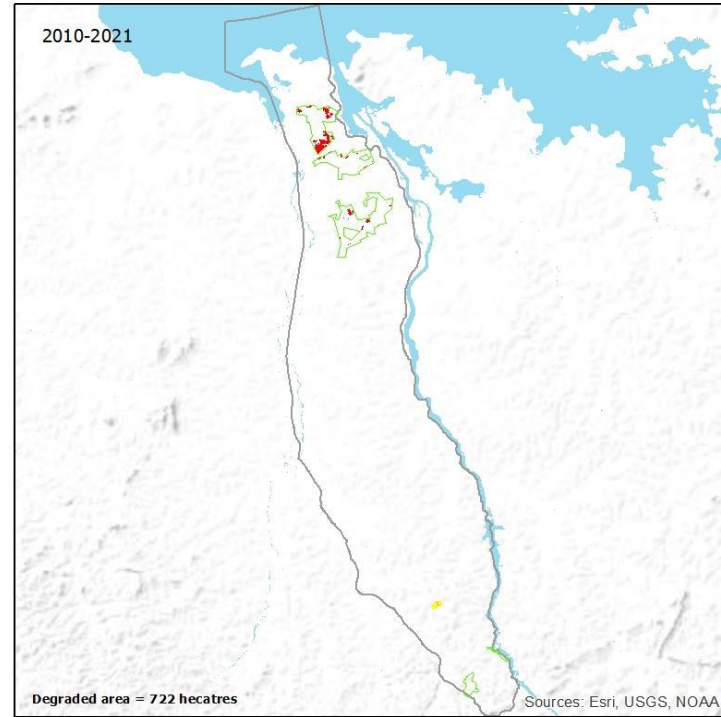
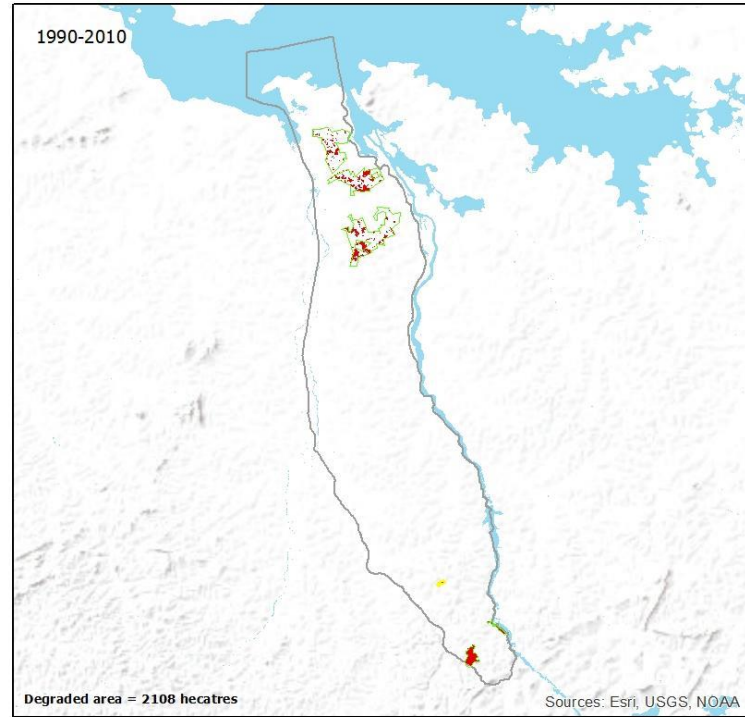
3.1.1 Encroachment in Lakeshore Range

In the **Kayunga district**, the reserves most affected by encroachment in Kayunga district include **Wamale, Kiula, and Bajo Central Forest Reserves**. These areas have seen extensive encroachment by residents and businesses, including the establishment of agricultural activities such as sugar cane growing, settlements, and trading centers. Recently, the parliament of Uganda revealed that about 70,000 households occupy these forest reserves, resulting in urbanization and the development of infrastructure such as parishes and villages (bit.ly/46C5UON). The major challenges include illegal land titling and encroachment by various groups, including powerful government officials and those linked to military entities. NFA continues to seek legal redress to nullify fraudulent land titles. The other challenge is illegal activities such as the clearing of forest land for sugarcane plantations by companies like GM Sugar Company Ltd.

In **Wakiso district**, encroachment in the local and central forest reserves in Wakiso District stood at 1,335 hectares (for the period 1990 – 2010) but decreased to 1,255 hectares in the years 2010 – 2021. The decrease in encroachment is attributed to the increased uptake of private tree farming as a business. However, it must be noted that there is increased encroachment in specific reserves like **Gunda LFR around Katabi town, Kitubulu, and Nonve Central Forest Reserve** where there exist illegal land titles, some of which were canceled but still have standing houses. The threats include illegal sand mining, the establishment of fish ponds, unauthorized settlements, and illegal acquisition of land titles.

In the **Mpigi district**, encroachment on Mpigi’s local and central forest reserves was 8,127 between 1990 – 2010 and reduced to 2,728 hectares in 2012 -2021. The decrease is attributed to private tree farmers that have taken up reforestation. However, there is increased abuse in the CFMs in the district in general. There is extensive encroachment due to agricultural activities, charcoaling, grazing, and settlement.

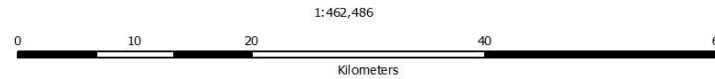
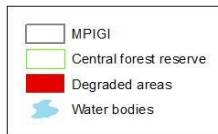
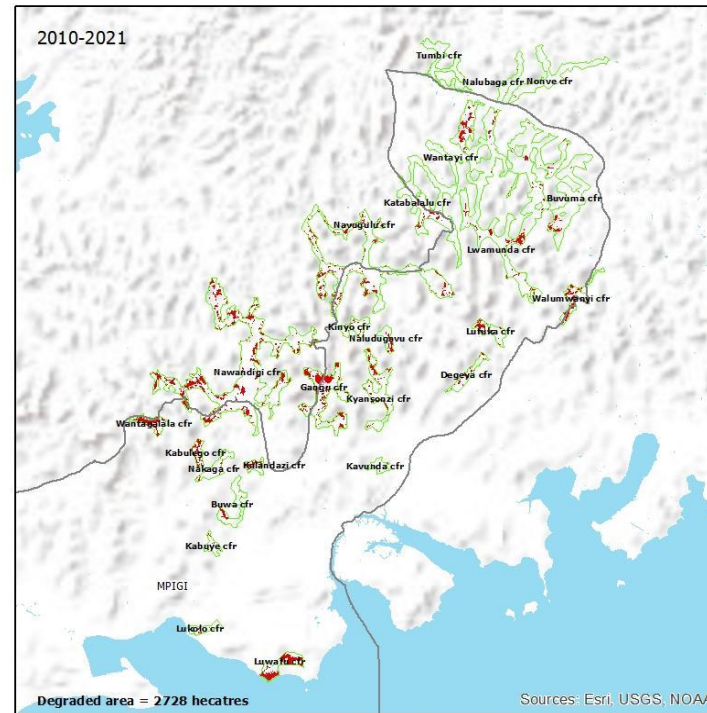
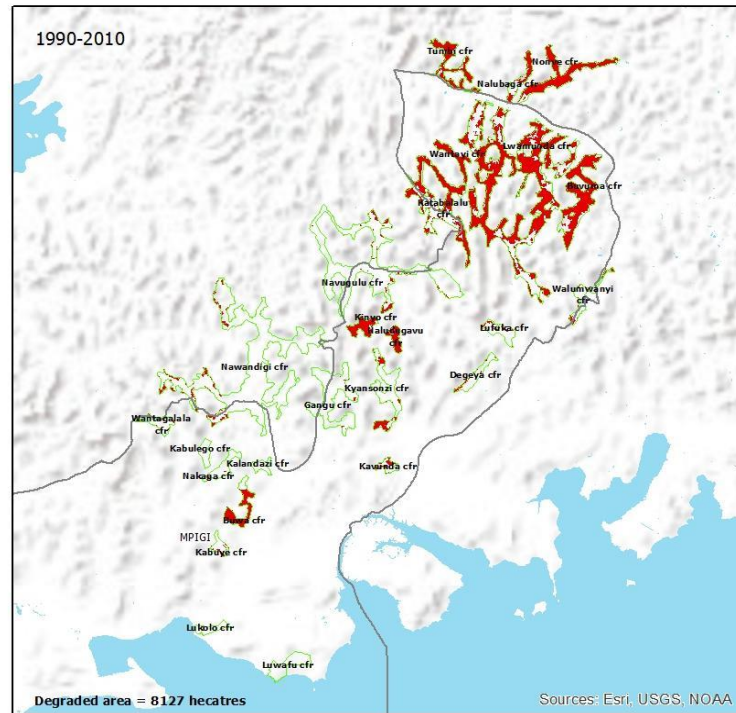
DEGRADATION IN CENTRAL AND LOCAL FOREST RESERVES



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False Northing: 10,000,000.0000
Central Meridian: 33.0000
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Figure 1: Map of Kayunga districts showing encroachment in forest reserves

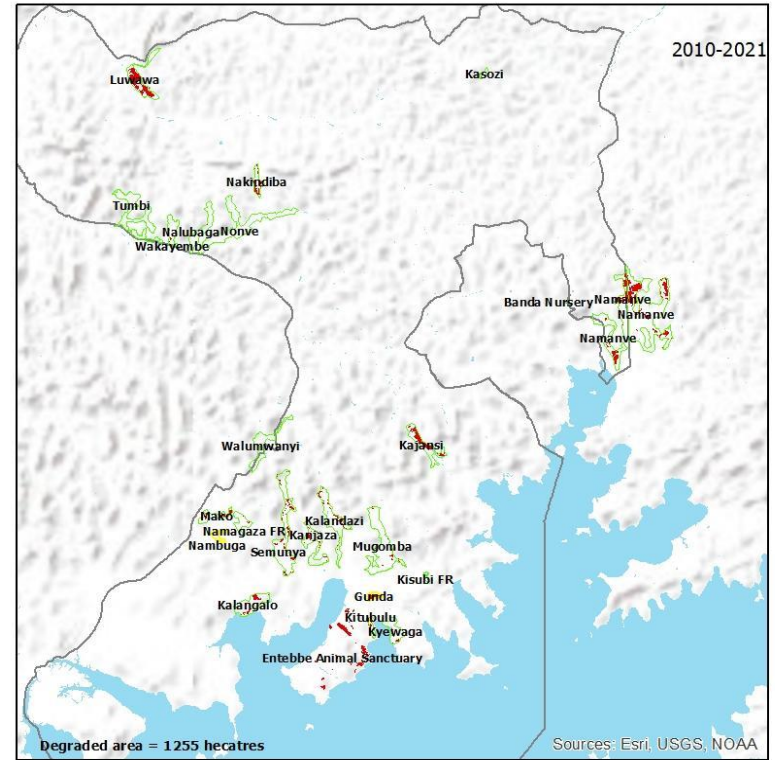
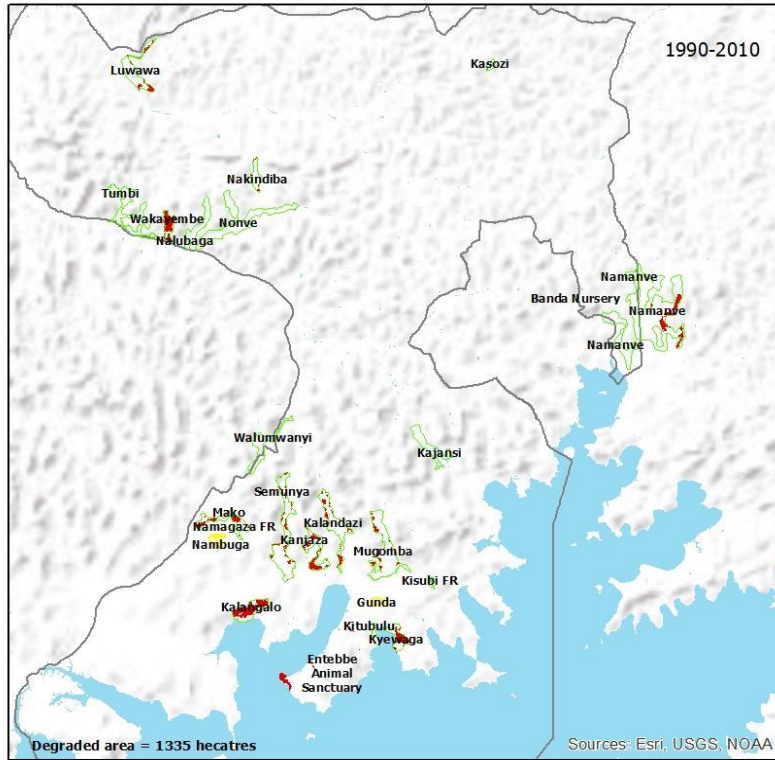
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 False Northing: 10,000,000.0000
 Central Meridian: 33.0000
 Scale Factor: 0.9996
 Latitude Of Origin: 0.0000
 Units: Meter

Figure 2: Map of Mpigi district showing encroachment in forest reserves

DEGRADATION IN CENTRAL AND LOCAL FOREST RESERVES



Category

- Central forest reserve
- Local forest reserve
- WAKISO
- Degraded areas
- Water bodies

1:500,000

Kilometers

Coordinate System: WGS 1984 UTM Zone 36S
 Projection: Transverse Mercator
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 False Northing: 10,000,000.0000
 Central Meridian: 33.0000
 Scale Factor: 0.9996
 Latitude Of Origin: 0.0000
 Units: Meter

Figure 3: Map of Wakiso district showing encroachment in forest reserves

3.1.2 Encroachment in South Western Range

The greater Bushenyi district comprising Mitooma, Rubirizi, Buhweju, and Bushenyi, is the least affected district with encroachment. Encroachment stood at 1,670 hectares in 1990 and now stands at 1,219 hectares (see also Map 5). Key areas in the district that are affected include the **Kalinzu Central Forest Reserve and Maramagambo Forest Reserve**. There are pockets of encroachment arising from agricultural expansion and the illegal cutting of trees by illegal miners. **Kyamuhunga LFR is illegally** leased out to people planting trees.

In the **Mitooma district**, encroachment primarily involves illegal activities such as cultivation, settlement, logging, and charcoal burning, which lead to deforestation and environmental degradation. This is, however, minimal. There are initiatives such as collaborative forest management (CFM) agreements with local communities that involve them in forest conservation efforts and reforestation programs to restore degraded areas.

In **Rubirizi district**, the Kalinzu CFR, which serves as a wildlife corridor between protected areas like Maramagambo Forest and Queen Elizabeth National Park, has faced severe encroachment from nearby communities, but they are not extreme. These communities have historically exploited the forest for timber, firewood, and agricultural land.

In the **Buhweju district**, encroachment in these reserves is primarily driven by activities such as illegal logging, agricultural expansion, charcoal burning, cutting trees as a result of mining, and encroachment due to military personnel guarding miners.

DEGRADATION IN CENTRAL AND LOCAL FOREST RESERVES

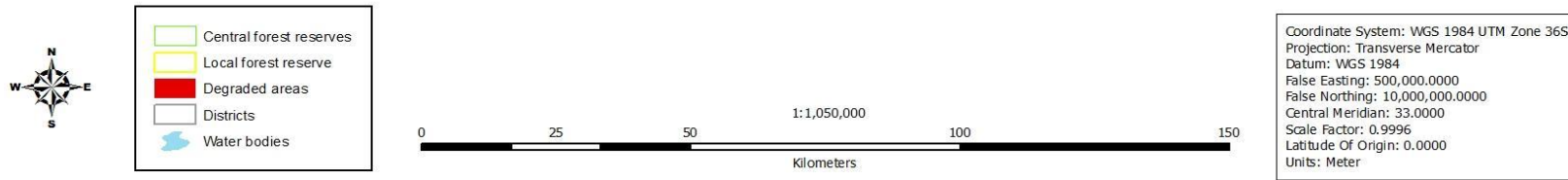
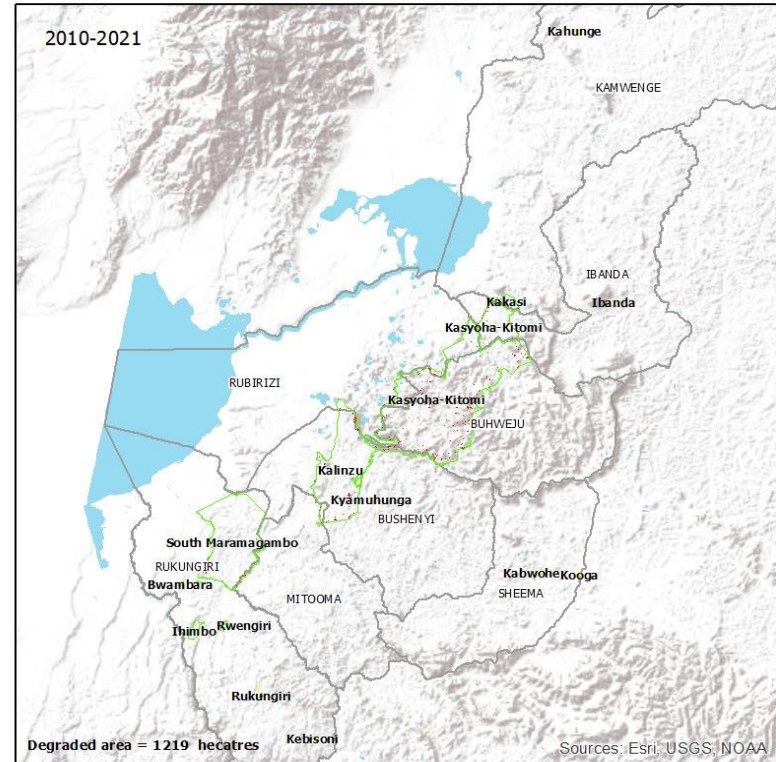
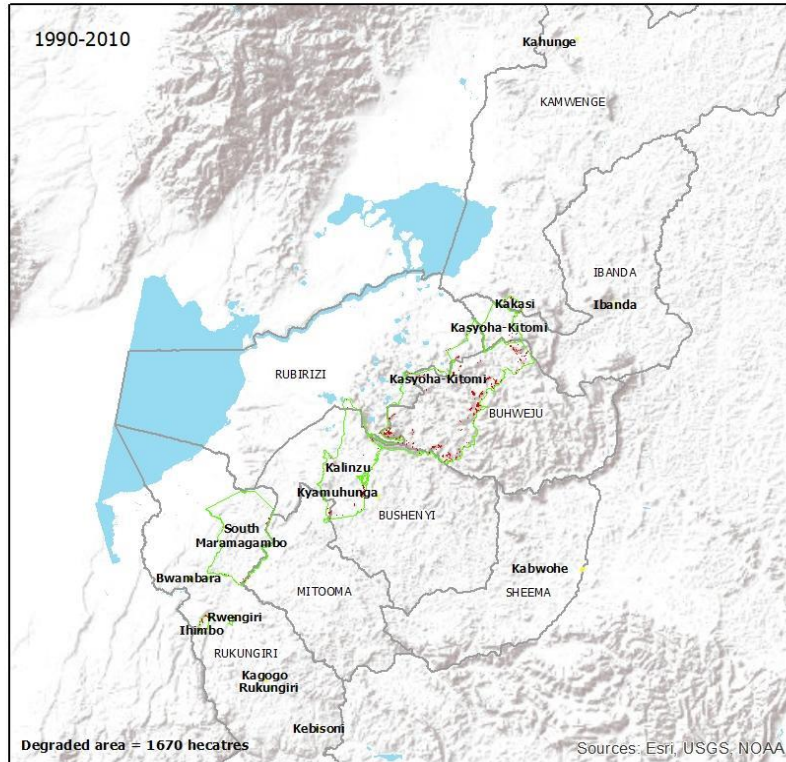


Figure 4: Map of the greater Bushenyi district showing encroachment in forest reserves

3.1.3 Encroachment in Budongo Systems Range

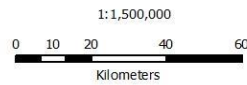
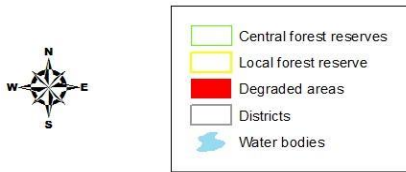
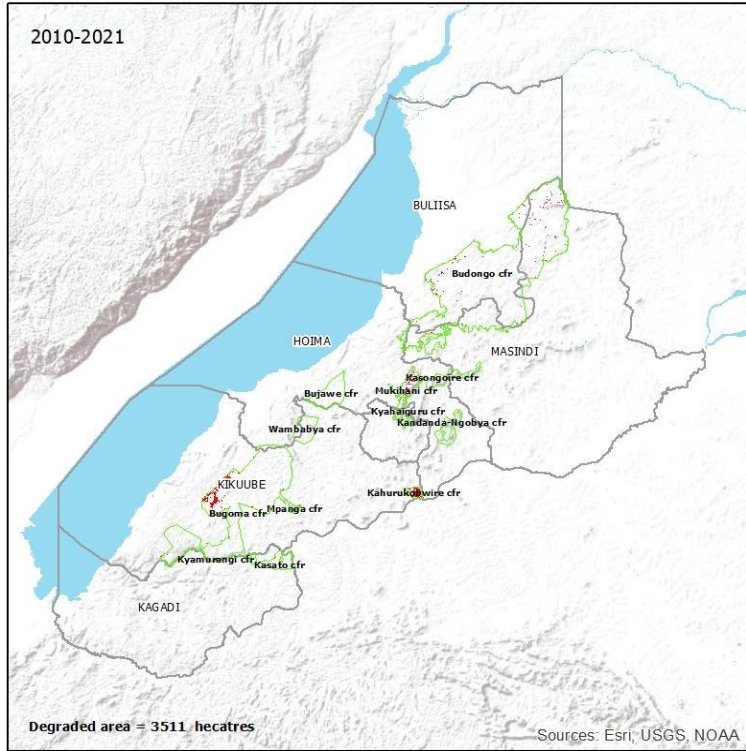
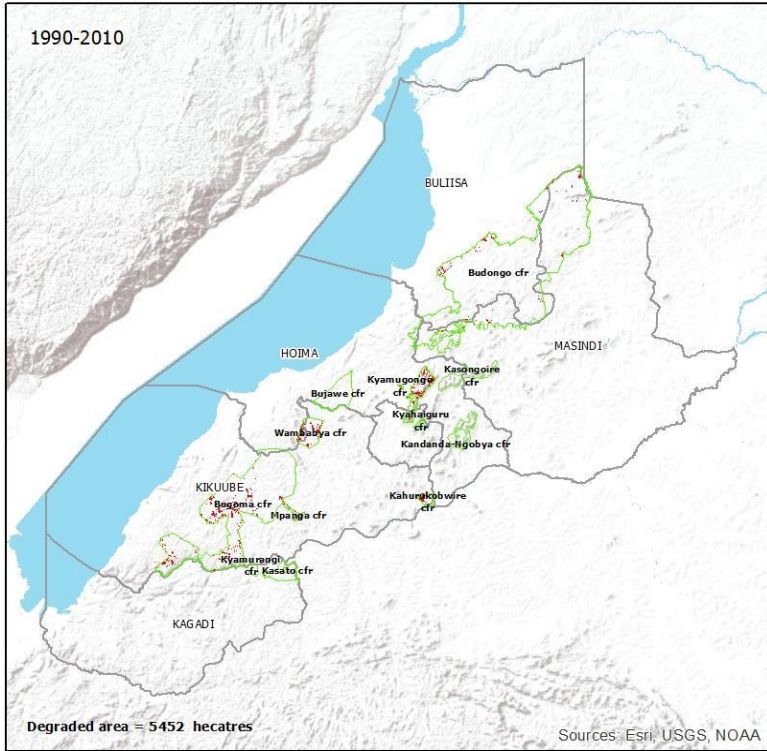
In Hoima District, encroachment has become a significant threat to the sustainability of these forests. The most notable area of concern is the **Ibamba Central Forest Reserve**, where there is unauthorized tree felling that has escalated, leading to the depletion of valuable timber species and causing harm to the overall forest structure and biodiversity. There is large-scale charcoal production, driven by local and external demand (due to oil and gas development-related immigration), leading to forest degradation as trees are cut and burned to produce charcoal, impacting the forest's regenerative capacity. There is agricultural conversion where forest lands are being cleared to make way for farming, including the cultivation of cash crops like sugarcane. This conversion of forested land into agricultural fields reduces forest cover and disrupts the ecological balance of the area.

These forms of encroachment threaten not only the environmental integrity of the Budongo Ecosystems Range but also the long-term sustainability of the resources that local communities and wildlife depend on. Addressing these issues requires stronger enforcement, sustainable land-use practices, and community involvement in forest management.

In **Kikuube** District, encroachment on forest reserves has reached alarming levels, particularly affecting **Bugoma Central Forest**, one of the largest and most significant forests in the region. The forest has lost approximately **8,000 hectares** due to encroachment, primarily driven by land claims where some individuals assert that their land was granted by the **Bunyoro Kitara Kingdom**, leading to disputes over forest ownership and access. These claims complicate efforts to protect the forest, as local and traditional authorities become involved. Secondly, certain encroachers (Hoima Sugar and M. Zaid) possess land titles for forested areas, obtained under dubious circumstances. This creates legal challenges for forest conservation as some land titles conflict with the designated forest reserve boundaries.

The most affected areas in Kikuube include **Ngogoli, Kasenta, Nyairongo, and Mandwiga**, located in the **Kyangwali and Kabwoya sub-counties**. These areas have witnessed substantial forest clearance for activities such as agriculture, settlement, and logging. The encroachment not only threatens biodiversity but also undermines forest conservation efforts. To address this, clear delineation of forest boundaries, legal action against illegal land titles, and community engagement in forest management are essential.

DEGRADATION IN CENTRAL AND LOCAL FOREST RESERVES



Coordinate System: WGS 1984 UTM Zone 36S
 Projection: Transverse Mercator
 Datum: WGS 1984
 False Easting: 500,000.0000
 False Northing: 10,000,000.0000
 Central Meridian: 33.0000
 Scale Factor: 0.9996
 Latitude Of Origin: 0.0000
 Units: Meter

Figure 5: Map of Hoima and Kikube districts showing encroachment in forest reserves

3.2 Encroachment arising from tree planting permits and licenses in forest reserves

3.2.1 The genesis of tree planting permits and licenses

The genesis of tree planting permits and licenses in Uganda's CFRs and LFRs is rooted in the country's historical context and legislative reforms aimed at promoting sustainable forest management. It is a regulatory mechanism designed to control and promote sustainable forest management. Following the forest sector reforms of the 1990s and 2000s, the National Forestry and Tree Planting Act, of 2003 was enacted, and thus, the establishment of NFA in 2004. The NFA was tasked with managing CFRs and promoting sustainable forest practices, including the issuance of tree planting permits and licenses.

Tree Planting Permits were issued to individuals, communities, or organizations that wish to engage in tree-planting activities within CFRs and LFRs. The permits specified the terms and conditions under which tree planting can occur, including species selection, management practices, and monitoring requirements. To date, the NFA has analyzed their performance according to ranges. In the Lake Shore, the South Western, and Budongo System Ranges, this is how they have performed (Table 2).

Table 3: Performance of tree planting permits and licenses

Range	Performance	No of CFR	No of Farmers	Area Ha	CFR	Active Farmer	Area Ha	Area allocated
		Farmers Allocated			Active Farmers			
South Western Range	76%	23	438	14,646	22	340	9,193	14,596
Lakeshore Range	72%	81	1,379	20,020	80	1,089	14,099	19,565
Budongo Systems Range	63%	13	571	4,814	11	368	3,290	4,319

Source: Status Report on Tree Farming in Central Forest Reserves, August 2023

In the three ranges considered in this study, which covers the districts of Kayunga, Wakiso, Mpigi, Bushenyi, Mitooma, Rubirizi, Buhweju, Hoima, and Kikuube, almost all central forest reserves set aside for planting, have been planted. About 76% of farmers for the South Western Range that have been allocated land responded and were actively involved in planting. In the other ranges, performance stands at 72% for the Lake Shore Range and 63% for the Budongo Systems Range. In terms of the area planted, performance stands at 62.7% in the South Western Range, 70.4%

for the Lake Shore Range, and 68.3% for the Budongo Systems Range. Overall, it is an encouraging performance.

3.2.2 Encroachment arising from tree planting permits and licenses

- i. The National Forestry Authority (NFA) faces challenges in **verifying tree planting permits and identifying legitimate private forest owners**. So far, the progress registered is commendable, as NFA is trying to get coordinates of planted plots and try to register them. However, some individuals have planted trees without paying license fees or being registered with the NFA and continue to encroach on natural belts in forest reserves. This is common in all the forest reserves where private tree planters are planting trees.
- ii. Most of the tree planters end up with **only land offers and have fears of processing permits. Some are reluctant to process, some fear reaching the NFA offices, some have phobias and the complexity of the process and some have hidden agendas other than tree planting for example needing agricultural land for grazing and selling**. Today, NFA has requested all those with land offers to register for regularization and acquire tree planting permits.
- iii. The NFA Board's decision to consider those who did not have licenses **allowed Range Managers, Sector Managers, and even Forest Supervisors to become 'landlords' of sorts, dishing out portions of land, and planting without permits, that they would later regularize**. There are tree planters who have been seconded by Sector Managers and Forest Supervisors, accessed land before the permit process, and have large establishments of plantations and woodlots. By allowing such people to regularize, NFA lost the principle objective of tree planting permits and therefore unable to collect the respective revenue.

However, the **regularization of tree planting permits** generated **4 billion UGX** last year and is projected to raise **6 billion UGX** this year. This significant increase demonstrates the growing interest in tree-planting initiatives, particularly in response to the need for afforestation, reforestation, and sustainable land management in Uganda. However, regularization will be allowed only one planting cycle, not renewable. NFA is aware of the regrettable damage it caused, but it has been turned into a positive.
- iv. In the Kisindi Sector (Hoima and Kikuube District), **158 permits are found in Bujawe CFR (74), Kasongore CFR (65), Nyamugongo CFR (4), Kyahaguru CFR (14) and Bugoma CFR (1)**. These permits were verified by the Executive Director and issued permits that are valid for 49 years. **Many of the planters do not have permits but have Letter of Offers. These have continued paying ground rent to NFA irrespective of not having fulfilled registration (Not treated as illegalities)**. Some of the forest-adjacent communities, who originally cultivated crops in the reserve, resorted to trees growing. They are reluctant to obtain legal tree planting permits and documents thinking that this land belongs to the Kingdom of Bunyoro. Nevertheless, they are encouraged and motivated to pursue the permits.

- v. In the Lake Shore Range, in the Lwamunda and Mpigi Sectors, and the Kisindi Sector, there are cases where tree farmers are tempted to sell (“goodwill”) or swap ownership of permits or licenses. This was identified as a challenge, and addressed by the issuance of guidelines for exchange of interests and transference of rights. A person intending to exchange his or her permit writes to the Executive Director of the National Forestry Authority, who then prescribes the procedure and fees to pay for the change of ownership (transfers his/her rights) to happen, on top of what has been agreed between the two parties. Despite the opportunity given to them to follow the guidelines, they don’t.
- vi. There are lots of encroachment pockets by tree farmers in Kashyoha-Kitomi, the Mpigi cluster of forests, Kisindi Sector, largely impacting natural belts where deforestation and forest degradation (encroachment) are taking place, as licensed tree planters expand their land, cutting natural forest and increasing their allocated size of land. For example, if the private tree planter was originally allocated 10 hectares, they encroach on the neighboring natural belt to increase their allocation to 20 hectares. This is sometimes done with the knowledge of Forest Supervisors and it’s an illegality, that reduces the size of the natural belt, and has an impact on biodiversity loss.
- vii. Charcoal burning among private tree farmers is a booming, but illegal practice, that is contrary to the licensed activities, and contrary to forestry policy and law. It is particularly common with tree farmers in the Kashyoha-Kitomi, Kalinzu, and Lwamunda Sectors. Because of the fall in prices of Eucalyptus poles and timber products, and a lack of innovation on other products such as crafts, wood chips, pulpwood, and plywood among others, farmers have resorted to selling trees to buyers who then covert them into charcoal. Because tree farmers do not monitor their plots after the sale, the persons who bought the trees end up encroaching on natural trees from the natural forest to mix with the eucalyptus trees for charcoal. So, you find a lot of degraded land in the middle of forests. This is a big challenge in Rutoto. It used to be with the timber dealers, cutting natural trees for timber, these stopped, and it’s now with the charcoal burners. As the district forest officer Bushenyi, adds:
- “The demand for charcoal is high, charcoal price is equally high, and tree planters no longer grow trees for timber, they usually sell to charcoal burners when the trees are still young”, said Mr. Atwebembeire Micheal, DFO, Bushenyi.*
- viii. Within NFA, some corrupt individuals have allowed tree farmers to grow trees without paying for permits and accepted bribes in exchange for land for tree growing, which, themselves ended up selling to unsuspecting buyers, who later wanted to own land titles. Whereas this has been wiped out, it left NFA with unhealing scars and associated problems to resolve and handle (cross-checking with records, conducting field inspections, and engaging with local communities to ensure accuracy), facing the task of verifying legitimate tree planting permits.
- ix. The illegality common in all tree planting permits is the Taugnya System, a form of agroforestry in which short-term crops are grown alongside trees to utilize the land, control weeds, reduce establishment costs, generate early income, and stimulate the growth of trees. This is an illegal practice. For example, annual crops that are shade tolerant crops can grow alongside trees as a

way of managing weeds in the trees. However, it has proven to be effective in managing trees on the forest reserve land, if well managed and practiced. The disadvantage is that people who practice it on reserve land may do it forever, becoming permanent encroachers, damaging trees, encroachment on natural belts, and altering tree planting patterns.

- x. Other forms of abuse of permits and licenses include grazing of animals on land planted with trees, as is the case for Kahaguru CFRs in Kisindi Sector. Illegal temporary animal grazing also occurs in Bugoma CFR notably by grazers who move with their animals in the reserve lands during dry spells and look for grass for their animals. Initially, NFA had issued grazing permits but now outlawed. There are large-scale maize production substituting trees growing in areas around the Lwamunda Sector and Mpanga Sector in the Mpigi and Wakiso districts, and encroachments on fragile ecosystems including wetlands, natural forests and naturally regenerating belts.

3.2.3 Recommendations for handling encroachments arising from private tree farmers.

- i. The Ministries, Departments, and Agencies concerned with the regulation of tree planting in forest reserves need a program-based approach to orient the mindset of tree planters. It involves encouraging them to adopt ethical and sustainable forestry practices while discouraging illegal activities such as encroachment, illegal logging, and unsustainable exploitation of forest resources.
- ii. Whereas charcoal burning and production is an important energy source for many households, it is a leading cause of deforestation and forest degradation, especially within Central Forest Reserves (CFRs) in Uganda. The Ministry of Energy and Mineral Development, MWE, and the National Forestry Authority have to sensitize and build capacity to understand the dangers of charcoal production in the forest reserves. There should be a total burn of such activity. The illegal and unsustainable production of charcoal has adverse environmental impacts, including loss of biodiversity, soil erosion, and climate change, and there is a need to sensitize charcoal producers, permit holders, and licensees operating within Central Forest Reserves on sustainable practices. In addition, there is a need to explore alternative energy sources like Liquefied Petroleum Gas (LPG) and sensitize the public to reduce illegal charcoal production.
- iii. The strategy of “naming and shaming” illegal activities in Central Forest Reserves (CFRs) and Local Forest Reserves (LFRs) should be revived, to publicly expose individuals, companies, or groups involved in illegal practices, such as illegal logging, encroachment, charcoal burning, and land grabbing, to deter future offenses and raise public awareness about forest conservation. This tactic will complement legal and enforcement measures by leveraging the power of public opinion and social accountability.
- iv. One of the ways to overcome encroachment challenges would be enhancing and sharing information at the Sector Level, or even Forest Supervisor Level, maintaining a tree planters information record-keeping system, and maintaining accurate and up-to-date attribute information on private tree farmers and the duration of the permit/licenses by use of

Geographic Information Systems (GIS), remote sensing, and drones to aid monitoring forest areas.

- v. NFA needs to ensure that there is stringent enforcement of forest regulations and guidelines for tree planters, through regular inspections, monitoring, and penalties for illegal activities that will deter unauthorized encroachment and planting. This must be backed up with improved staffing levels to take up the task. Whereas previously forest patrol men have been cleared of their areas, they are now demanding their payment. Another force to use is local environment committees (where they exist) to do parallel monitoring to the extent. The use of civil society organizations together with community-based organizations would add value.
- vi. Considering that there has been only one engagement (held in 2023) with private tree growers in 10 years (or so), the NFA must educate and sensitize the private tree growers, at the national level, at the Range Level, at the Sector Level or even at Forest Supervisor Level, about the importance of obtaining proper permits, adhering to regulations, and the role they play in the production of sawlogs, rafters, poles and other products, the potential source of marketing their products and produce. Such events will raise the profile of tree planting in the country, engaging local communities in forest management and enhancing transparency and accountability.
- vii. Centralized management of tree planting permits leads to inefficiencies, delays, and a lack of local expertise, hindering the effectiveness of reforestation efforts. **Decentralizing permit issuance to Ranges (Range Managers) would enable local decision-making**, leverage intimate knowledge of the land, promote forest community engagements, and allow for community inclusion in the forest decision-making process. This process would be more effective and efficient and the range would only be responsible for submitting the documents for signing to the ED to approve permit issuance.
- viii. Developing and adopting online application, vetting, and awarding systems for tree-planting permits to get rid of illegal permit owners who require regularisation. This strategy aims to enhance the management and regulation of tree-planting permits by allowing individuals or organizations to apply online, making the process more accessible and efficient. The system would assess the eligibility and legitimacy of applicants, ensuring permits are granted only to those who meet the required criteria. Once vetted, the system would officially issue permits to approved applicants. Processing all permits through a regulated and transparent platform, this approach would help eliminate unauthorized or illegal permits.
- ix. Tree growers or planters should be encouraged to grow indigenous trees in natural forests. The Uganda Biodiversity Fund argues that these native species help maintain biodiversity, improve ecosystem services, and are better suited to local conditions. Whereas this demand is correct, the National Forestry Authority indicates that it has more land available for planting exotic tree species, particularly in plantation development areas. However, we should take note of the tension in forestry between biodiversity conservation and the economic advantages of fast-growing exotic species for timber production.

- x. Advance and **legalize the Taungya system in tree plantations as it offers multiple benefits, balancing environmental sustainability with economic development and community needs, especially the provision of food.** Again, the system would be advanced to take care of the taungya system, monitoring to enforce compliance. However, this should be coupled with training and capacity building to enhance taungya systems. The training should emphasize which trees to grow (cover crops like pumpkins, watermelons, chili peppers, etc).

However, the National Forestry Authority (NFA) refused to allow tree planters to use the Taungya system, citing concerns that it is more destructive than constructive. The Taungya system permits farmers to plant crops alongside tree seedlings in forest reserves during the early stages of forest plantation establishment. While this system is theoretically beneficial—by providing food for local communities and encouraging tree planting—the NFA's decision is based on (i) the crops planted under the Taungya system require tending, which leads to the damage of young tree seedlings, reducing their survival rate, (ii) cultivation of crops alongside tree seedlings lead to soil degradation, nutrient depletion, and erosion, negatively affecting tree growth and the overall health of the forest, (iii) some farmers continue to use the land for agriculture creating long-term land-use conflicts (iv) the primary focus becomes crop cultivation rather than tree establishment, leading to reduced tree cover and a shift away from the primary goal of reforestation. These concerns led the NFA to reject the use of the Taungya system, favoring alternative forest management practices that ensure both effective reforestation and the protection of forest ecosystems.

- xi. To resolve conflicts between two neighboring permit holders that were assigned land for tree planting, and have since launched initiatives to outcompete the other by planting more land than allotted, **there should be initial internal boundary demarcation by NFA before the plots are identified and assigned to individuals.** This would reduce encroachment, even on natural belts.
- xii. All areas allocated to tree planters should be planted in two calendar years to avoid making land redundant. Tree planters who do not accomplish planting of their allocated land area, without a written but sound reason to the Executive Director of the National Forestry Authority, shall forfeit that land. Consequently, it will be allocated to another interested person.

3.3 Illegalities for Collaborative Forest Management (CFM) agreement in forest reserves

3.3.1 Background to collaborative forest management

Collaborative Forest Management (CFM) is an approach where stakeholders, mainly local communities and the National Forestry Authority, work together to manage forest resources. This method involves shared decision-making, benefits, and responsibilities to ensure sustainable forest management. CFM aims to balance ecological, economic, and social objectives, promoting conservation while also supporting the livelihoods of people who depend on forest resources.

The genesis of CFM in Uganda is a response to the limitations of traditional forest management approaches and the recognition of the critical role that local communities play in sustainable forest management. Through policy and legislative reforms, capacity building, and the establishment of formal agreements, CFM has become a cornerstone of Uganda's forest management strategy, promoting conservation, improving livelihoods, and fostering collaborative governance.

These groups, work in partnership with forest management staff of the National Forestry Authority (NFA). They often act as eyes and ears on the ground, reporting illegal activities such as logging, charcoal burning, thefts of trees, and other forms of encroachment.

They sign an agreement between the group with NFA. The shortest agreement lasts for 10 years. The group is then monitored for three years, then 5 years. Then the agreement is renewed after 5 years depending on the performance in the previous years. Currently, there are 14 legally registered CFM groups in the Budongo Systems Range, 6 in the South Western Range, and over 150 CFM groups in the Lake Shore Range.

3.3.1.1 Collaborative Forest Management Groups in South Western Range

There are 6 CFM Groups in the SW Range, one in Kalinzu Forest Reserve called Ndangara Nyakianja Parishes Tutungukye Group (NNTG) and 5 in Kashoha-Kitomi (KK) Central Forest Reserve. Those in Kashoha Kitomi are Ndagaro Environmental Conservation Association (NECA), Buzenga Environmental Conservation Association (BECA), Butoha Tukwatanise Turinde Obyobuhangwa Environmental Conservation Association (BUTTECA), Mwongera Parish Environmental Conservation Association (MPECA) and Katanga Tree Growers Association (KATEGA).

3.3.1.2 Collaborative Forest Management Groups Budongo Ecosystems Range

Overall, there are 14 CFM groups in the Budongo Systems Range. Those in the Kisindi Sector that comprises Hoima and Kikuube districts are 7 which constitute the Mpanga Forest and Development Association, Kaseta Tugenda Mumiso Forest and Development Association, Kabwoya Conservation and Development Association, Kasale Conservation and Development Association, Kidoma Conservation and Development Association, Bugambe & Wambabya Forest and Development Association and Wambabya Forest and Development Association (that is yet to complete the process of signing an agreement). CFM agreements only exist in natural forests and it is rare to find CFM in areas dedicated to tree planting permits.

3.3.1.3 Collaborative Forest Management Groups in Lake Shore Range, Mpanga Sector.

Within the Mpanga, there are the Kisitu Environmental Conservation Development Association, Bulungu Balitulabilako Development Association, Nkinga Tweekembe Environment Group, Lufuka

Tukolewamu Development Association, and Mpenja Environment Management Association. However, these are simply umbrella groups, with several sub-groups that make an umbrella. Therefore, they are characterized by group dynamics tempting the NFA to terminate their agreements sighting inconsistencies in the way they conduct business.

3.3.2 Support from NFA to CFM Groups

The CFM groups have received support from NFA in the form of training, especially on tree nursery establishment, beekeeping and management (and recently received 700 bee hives per group for the Kisindi Sector), craft making (and given free craft-making machines per group in Kisindi Sector), trained in business development skills and liquid shop making, groups given machines for making liquid shop and trained on briquette making.

In return, CFM groups provide forest patrols, arrest illegalities in forest reserves, give information to NFA in case of encroachments, alert NFA in case of potential land-grabbing activities, and confiscate tools used in illegalities (nets, spears, machetes). In addition, they submit monthly feedback reports to forest supervisors, and in case of an illegality, they give instant reports. They are involved in the monitoring and management of forests.

CFMs have been instrumental in reducing illegal activities through their patrolling efforts. Their presence in the forest acts as a deterrent to potential illegal actors and helps in the early detection of unauthorized activities. Patrol teams engage with local communities to raise awareness about the importance of forest conservation and the legal implications of illegal activities. These teams work closely with the National Forestry Authority (NFA) and other relevant bodies, providing them with critical information to help in enforcement and conservation efforts.

3.3.3 Encroachment and other illegalities from CFM arrangements;

- i. Most of the group members from Lake Shore Range, Budongo Ecosystems Range, and South Western Range, are persons formerly involved in illegal activities like the hunting of animals, illegal logging and harvesting, sand mining, charcoal burning, and commercial firewood cutting. **They are not reformed 100% and converted into forest stewards. As a result, some illegalities occur to a certain extent**, pointing to the need for more efforts to completely eradicate illegalities.
- ii. Most of the CFM Groups get involved in the form of encroachment related **to the alteration of tree planting patterns to allow the growth of shade tolerant and forest food crops** such as climbing yams, and pumpkins. Mostly, these are CFM groups found in the Kalinzu and Mpigi Sectors. The proposal is to put it to the task of management for CFM groups, at least the face indictment.
- iii. While CFMs are intended to protect and manage forest resources, CFM group leaders exploit these groups for personal gain. These are found in Mpigi, Mukono, and Mawokota and were formed out of politics during campaigns, and didn't go through the initiation steps before being

recruited. These groups are involved in **land grabbing, particularly those in the Mpanga Sector, in the Mpigi district**. NFA will not renew about 120 CFM group agreements in the Lake Shore Range upon expiry as they are involved in land grabbing, land hoarding, exchange of land for money, encroachment to grow crops, and engaged in illegalities of all sorts.

- iv. Collaborative Forest Management (CFM) group members (and at times communities neighboring forests) **connive with people in illegal activities in forest reserves**. Some CFM group members exchange valuable information with illegal participants for monetary gains. This information is used to fuel illegalities such as charcoal burning, timber cutting, petty thefts, sand mining, and hunting of wild game among other forms of crime. Group members are particularly charged with the responsibility to guard the forests where possible.
- v. CFM group members often **engage in voluntary work without direct compensation for their time**. They are involved in forest patrols, and monitoring activities for which they are not paid, yet there are recommendations for such payments in the new draft CFM guidelines. This lack of financial reward poses significant challenges to the sustainability and effectiveness of CFMs.
- vi. Benefit-sharing between the National Forestry Authority (NFA) and Collaborative Forest Management (CFM) groups has been a point of contention. **Many CFM groups advocate for a model similar to that of the Uganda Wildlife Authority (UWA), where 20% of park entry fees are shared with local communities to support conservation efforts and improve livelihoods**. Proposals to adopt similar benefit-sharing incentives have been made in the new guidelines. Adopting a more equitable benefit-sharing model similar to that of the UWA could significantly enhance the effectiveness of CFMs and promote sustainable forest management.
- vii. Failure of CFM groups to **cooperate with the NFA staff, failure to finalize the CFM agreement, failure to renew the CFM agreement, failure to sensitize communities, and failure to demarcate boundaries, which has resulted in conflicts with the community leading to loss of group sustainability in form and focus**. These dynamics have led to the disintegration of the group, now members act in their capacities, rarely supervised by the NFA.
- viii. There is an elite capture of the groups. For example, **groups fail to plant trees in the allocated area**, later transferring management rights (by way of exchanging money) to another group member. That member **ceases to be a CFM group**, but rather, a private tree grower who should be paying for a tree-growing permit.
- ix. CFM group members participate in the illegal harvesting of trees, sometimes past their areas of jurisdiction.

3.3.4 Recommendations for handling encroachment in CFM Groups.

- i. Most of the CFM group members are former forest encroachers and were once involved in malpractices in the forests. There is a need to keep this category of stakeholders close and involve other stakeholders such as local government in these relationships.

- ii. It is necessary to provide viable alternatives to livelihoods for CFM members, as stipulated in the new CFM guidelines, to reduce the economic pressures that they face that drive them to engage in illegal activities. This can include training and support for sustainable agriculture, energy, soil and water conservations, eco-tourism, and other income-generating activities. Already, the South Western Range and Budongo Systems Range are supported by WWF-Uganda Country Office, the IFPA-CD project of the World Bank, Eco-Trust, and other development partners to encourage former encroachers, now organized in CFM Groups, to provide a link between forestry and other sectors of development.
- iii. CFM communities can be helped to align the CFM group's objectives with the goals of the Parish Development Model, Operation Wealth Creation, *Emyooga*, DRDIP, Catchment Management Initiatives, and others, and present CFM as part of a broader strategy to engage local communities in sustainable forest management. Again, these proposals are alluded to in the new CFM guidelines. By doing so, CFM groups can be helped to prepare a comprehensive and compelling proposal, engage key stakeholders, and secure funding to support their sustainable forest management activities.
- iv. The success of CFM groups depends on the allocation of more resources to the NFA and District Forestry Officers, who continuously liaise and link projects and programs of government to CFM group members. If this is not operationalized, CFM groups will blend with general community development issues, and continue being relevant to the communities. CFM activities should reflect the benefits that accrue to the entire community.

3.4 Eco-tourism sites in forest reserves

Eco-tourism sites in forest reserves in the South Western Range, Budongo Ecosystems Range, and Lakeshore Range are involved in many illegalities. There aren't many eco-tourism licenses, since it is a costly adventure. In Mpanga Eco-Tourism, it is failing because of a lack of capacity. In Kitubulu CFRs, they established lodges, campsites, or other facilities that are failing. Whereas they have an ecotourism license, they have no human and financial capacity and are simply hoarding land and their licenses have to be cancelled by NFA. This is unlawful use of forest land.

Whereas the Kalinzu Eco-tourism center looks operational, some trees were cut down to clear land for tourism infrastructure. Destruction of vegetation and natural habitats to make way for tourist facilities is illegal.

3.5 On Boundary Opening

Opening and demarcating the boundaries of forest reserves is a crucial practice in forest management, particularly for limiting encroachment. This process involves physically marking the perimeters of forest reserves and maintaining these markers to ensure they remain visible and recognized. By providing legal clarity, preventing unauthorized land use, enhancing community involvement, and supporting enforcement, boundary demarcation plays a critical role in conserving forest ecosystems and promoting sustainable land use practices.

Most of the forest reserves are not reopening for a long time and, therefore are not clear, save for a few forests. Reserves in the South Western Range have been opened. However, last year, in 2023, while opening the forest reserve boundary for Kalinzu, people around Rutoto were not convinced about the boundary opening exercises. Unfortunately, the lead person died, and the complaint was shelved. The Boundary between the main road and the forest reserve was pushed down and that led to the communities complaining that they were not compensated while NFA claimed that they compensated them.

In the Budongo Ecosystems Range, to be specific in the Kisindi Sector (Hoima and Kikuube districts) only Wambabya has fully opened boundaries. Consequently, there are heavy settlements within these reserves, citing a lack of knowledge of the extent of the boundary. Also, some reserves around Hoima district (Ibamba, Kyahaiguru, and Kandanda) are now part of the city divisions with massive developments and constructions happening now in these areas.

3.6 Mining in Central Forest Reserves

1) The study observed mining activities in the Kashoha-Kitomi Forest Reserve, of the district boundary for Buhweju, Ibanda, and Rubirizi districts. That place has a lot of gold and it also flows to Queen Elizabeth National Park. The National Forestry Authority allowed gold prospectors, Mauve Uganda Ltd and C-Asian Mining and Minerals Ltd, with bulldozers, to undertake gold exploration activities in the Kashoha-Kitomi forest reserve. The exploration caused a lot of destruction to the trees and raised environmental and social concerns. The companies mining had heavily deployed military personnel, making it difficult for local leaders to monitor their activities and enforce environmental regulations. People complained about artisanal and small-scale miners excavating in various places and feared the use of hazardous substances like mercury and cyanide to extract gold. Environment concerns revolved around the loss of biodiversity, destruction of habitats, and possible pollution of a crucial catchment for Lake Edward. Enforcement and effectiveness of measures by the NFA and NEMA were challenging.

For mining to take place in Kashoha Kitomi, it should have been preceded by an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA), that assessed the potential environmental, social, and economic impacts of a proposed project. It should have engaged stakeholders, including local communities, in evaluating the potential impacts and mitigation measures. It should have suggested ways to avoid, minimize, or compensate for negative impacts and it should have ensured the project complies with national and international environmental laws and standards. These steps were not adequately followed and it raises serious concerns about the legality and sustainability of the mining activities.

2) There are isolated cases of **commercial sand mining** Budongo Ecosystems Range. In Kyahaiguru CFR in the Kisindi Sector, there is commercial large-scale sand mining. The person carrying out sand mining owns an illegal title for the Kyahaiguru CFR (1,888 hectares), and it is part of the entire land title covering a large area, secured in the 1970s. NFA is battling with the

owner in court, with options to award him 400 hectares for a tree planting permit, which he has refused claiming the entire reserve. This area supplies 60% of the sand used for construction in Hoima City, including meeting all the sand demands for the Kabalega International Airport, currently under construction.

3) In forest reserves that are richly endowed with sand, like Kyewaga Central Forest Reserve in Wakiso District, and Lwamunda Central Forest Reserve in Mpigi District, sand mining is a major economic activity, and goes on unlicensed, but leads to severe degradation. Local communities initially engaged in sand mining, but the activity escalated when businessmen brought in heavy machinery. Despite efforts by the National Forestry Authority (NFA) to halt these activities, enforcement has been weak, and illegal mining continues, often under the guise of other projects like fish farming.

4. Illegal titling in Central Central Forest Reserves

Illegal titling refers to the unauthorized or fraudulent issuance of land titles that falsely grant ownership or usage rights to individuals or entities over land that they do not legally own or have rights to. This practice involves corrupt activities and violations of legal procedures, often resulting in significant legal, social, and environmental issues.

Illegal titling has today targeted the issuance of titles in central and local forest reserves, yet, they are protected areas, vested under public trust, managed for and on behalf of the people of Uganda. Illegal titling in central and local forest reserves reflects broader challenges in land governance, political stability, and environmental management. While significant steps have been taken to address the issue, continued efforts are needed to strengthen legal frameworks, enhance enforcement, reduce corruption, and involve local communities in sustainable forest management. Hundreds of people are involved, and they come up with a lot of scary documents, backed by powerful people who claim that they are above the law. Land grabbing has become a sophisticated process with the land grabbers seeking court injunction orders which gives them authority to continue using the land without the land titles hence NFA has challenges in handling such scenarios. Nonetheless, there are glimpses of documents that point to the fact that illegal titling in forest reserves is on the rise, evolving with time.

land titles in CFRs in Budongo Systems Range

There are recent interests (in June 2024) from Bunyoro Kitara Kingdom, based on the return of properties to the traditional leader of Bunyoro, under the Traditional Rulers (Restitution of Assets and Properties) Statute of 1993. They are targeting Kitigo grassland (described as a hunting area for Bunyoro) which is part of Budongo Forest Reserve. They are using the Buliisa District Local Government to raise the required paperwork to effect the acquisition of land titles to carve off 700 square miles for sugarcane growing. This will leave the National Forestry Authority in jeopardy. But if the political heads in Bunyoro get involved, they might get headway, citing examples like

the need for the forest to mitigate the impacts of oil and gas developments, and the need to house various flora and fauna in the Albertine region. Hon Balaam Barugahara has started and is quoted as saying,

“Yesterday, I received a call on Budongo, our biggest forest reserve. A fraudster using the Bunyoro Kingdom has gone ahead to go to the Bulisa district and has secured minutes to survey Budongo and carve off 700 square miles for sugarcane growing. I have never seen madness, yesterday I had to call the Royal Commission of Bunyoro, I called the Minister of Environment, National Forestry Authority, and I said this can’t be. If it means me stepping out of this ministerial job, I will do to go and protect that forest. Because that is the forest that is providing us with the rain that our poor farmers in Bunyoro are getting, rain to grow subsistence food. Secondly, we are doing mining of fuel, where there is fuel, there is heat, so for us to manage that heat, we need that Budongo forest. It is important for us the sounding board and our partners, we need to resist, even the President. I will put it to his notice, we don’t need to entertain that thuggery again. You cannot remove Budongo, a forest that has existed even before all of us were born, that you want to plant sugarcane, you want to plant maize, that is very wrong, it’s wrong. So even the council of Bullisa will be sued for that”.

The media stories in The NilePost, Daily Monitor, and The New Vision cover the story. They stress that leaders were told to expedite the process of boundary-opening process. Upon completion of the boundary opening, the land committee will then start processing the title.



Figure 6: Media clip from the New Vision, Friday, June 21, 2024

4.1.1 Illegalities in Kisindi Sector (covering Hoima and Kikuube District)

There are 30 individuals laying claim on land over Bugoma central forest reserve of Bugoma. All of them started after the Bunyoro Kitara Kingdom came up with a claim of 5,777.9 hectares of land in Bugoma Central Forest Reserve. Now, there are individuals (and companies) who have recently emerged, with similar claims. Most of them claim that the land was donated by the Omukama of Bunyoro, some have customary land titles that they want to convert into title deeds.

They are at various levels of approval, some seek the endorsement of senior government officials, particularly in the Ministry of Land, Housing, and Urban Development. Some, have endorsement from the Zonal Offices responsible for the issuance of land titles. Here below is a description of each:

- i. Bunyoro Kitara Kingdom and Hoima Sugar laid a claim of 5,777.9 hectares of land off Bugoma Central Forest Reserve. The NFA sued the Omukama of Bunyoro Kitara, Hoima Sugar Company, and Uganda Land Commission for illegal titling of land in Central Forest Reserve contrary to article 327 (a) of the constitution and section 44 of the Land Act. Court judged in civil suit No 0031 of 2016 at Masindi. The National Environment Management Authority issued an Environment and Socio Impact Assessment certificate allowing several activities to take place including sugar cane growing. The boundaries were opened and the land was located as per the survey file under instruction to survey (i/s) number MM/2/9414 currently utilized by the Kyangwali mixed land use project. According to the judgment, “the Omukama of Bunyoro Kitara Kingdom & Hoima Sugar are lawful owners of the land” comprised in PR HQT876 Folio 18 Bahanguzi Block 2, plot 216. This judgment implies that those 5,779 hectares, which is 14% of Bugoma CFR, renowned for biodiversity conservation, tourism, provision of environmental services, and needs of the community, gazetted over 90 years ago, were no cut off without going to formal gazettelement.
- ii. Mustafa Zaidi (M.Z. Agencies Limited) claims 2,000 Hectares (4,942 acres) of customary land at Kabwoya 296.5720 hectares (732.83acres) at Nyangabi, Kimbugu 662.3484 hectares (1636.663 acres) at Nyaigugu. He claims he was granted customary land by the Omukama of Bunyoro Kitara Kingdom, and has a copy of the certificate of title.

A detailed list of claimants of land from Bugoma CFR is provided in Appendix II.

In the Kisindi Sector, out of the 11 central forest reserves, “*only 5 out of 11 have no land title and grabbing issues*”, says Obonyo, Sector Manager, Kisindi Sector. However, the remaining 6 reserves have land titles and persons claiming ownership in those reserves. The people who claim ownership of land in forest reserves with titles don’t submit their titles to NFA for fear of confiscation and cancelation of their titles. So, NFA is struggling with getting these land titles out of the system. This is as shown in the table below;

Table 4: Forest reserves that have land titles in central forest reserves

Forest reserve	Area (Ha)	Number of illegal tiles
Bugoma	41,144	2
Mpanga	544	1
Bujawe	4,869	Safe
Wambabya	3,429	Safe
Kyamugongo	117	Safe

Kyahaiguru	422	1
Mukihani	3,619	1
Kahurukobwire	1,088	Safe
Kasongoire	3,069	Safe
Ibamba	313	Many (East city division)
Kandanda-Ngobye	2556	4

Source: Compiled for this study

4.2 Land Titles in the South-Western Range

This range covers Bushenyi, Mitooma, Rubirizi, and Buhweju districts. By and large, the South Western Range is free from land titles generally, save for the area designated for Plantation Development, and the area managed by the District Local Government. This is attributed to the great value communities attach to the conservation of biodiversity from which they earn revenue.

4.2.1 Bushenyi District Local Government

Bushenyi District Local Government is at the crossroads over the management of Kyamuhunga Local Forest Reserve, which measures over 10 hectares of land. Whereas it is known that 2 land titles were issued on that land area, there are several encroachments on the said reserve. Located on the way to Ishaka-Kasese Road, the reserve is flanked by a strip of houses in between the main road and itself at the front. Behind the reserve, there are old stamps, of eucalyptus trees, that lie outside the forest reserve creating suspension of a possible alteration of the boundaries. The District Local Government now manages ½ hectares of trees on that land that is titled. The remaining area of approximately 9.5 hectares is titled but the owner is not known. It is alleged that it was leased by the DLG, and funds were used to sponsor councilors for a trip to Rwanda or South Africa. The two land titles need to be cancelled, the encroachments need to be resolved, at a boundary re-opening needs to be carried out to ascertain where the houses are in the reserve.



The land occupied by pineapples seems curved off the reserve

Part of leased land with title

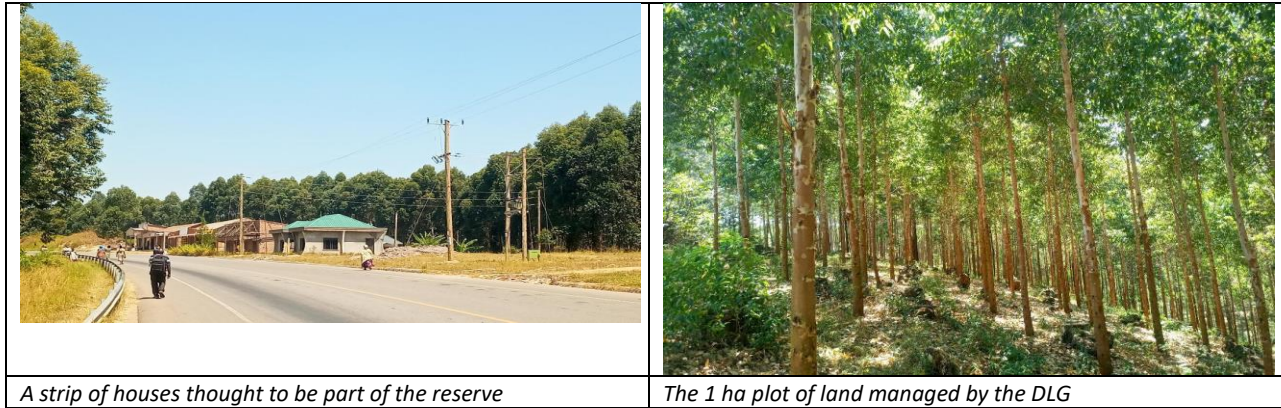


Figure 7: Photos taken from the Kyamuhunga Forest Reserve

4.2.2 Mbarara Plantations

Mbarara City and Mbarara District are located within the area planned for plantation establishment, and have several forest reserves. Mbarara Plantations is a Central Forest Reserve, and it is supposed to be under forest plantation, but is currently encroached, with land titles covering approximately 70% (according to NFA) of the reserve and now established with permanent settlements. Due to population increase, these reserves are under pressure for construction and other forms of development. Below is a land title in Mbarara Plantations, issued by the Mbarara Ministry Zonal Office, covering 1.9416 hectares, purportedly within Mbarara Plantations, Plot 87-93, Nyamityobora Road, which is now settled by land grabbers.

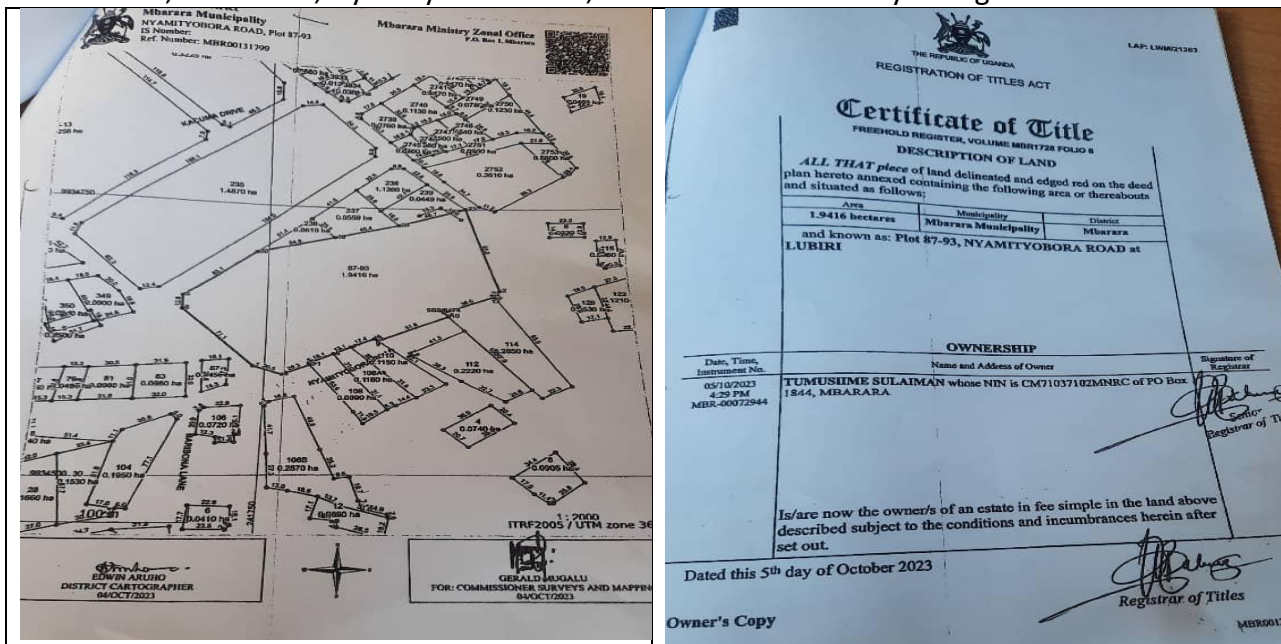


Figure 8: Copy of a land title from Mbarara Plantations

4.3 Land Titles in Lake Shore Range

4.3.1 Forest Reserves in Wakiso District

The forest reserves in Wakiso District are vital for ecological balance, biodiversity conservation, and providing various ecosystem services. Forests in Wakiso are a critical green belt for the rapidly urbanizing areas around Kampala and Wakiso districts as they support various species of birds, insects, and small mammals and are carbon sinks, contributing to climate regulation. These reserves featured a variety of indigenous tree species and supported local biodiversity in the recent past. To the east, towards Kyewaga and Kitubulu FRs, they support eco-tourism activities and act as a buffer for the Lake Victoria ecosystem, contributing to water quality and fishery health. However, they face significant challenges from encroachment for residential and commercial development, illegal activities, and urban expansion, exemplified by encroachment for illegal agriculture, pollution, and waste dumping from nearby urban areas, unlawful settlement, and overharvesting of forest resources for timber and charcoal production. Effective management and conservation strategies are essential to protect these valuable natural resources for future generations.

Table 5: Table showing CFRs - Boundary status, encroachment in part of Wakiso district.

No.	CFR	Area (ha)	Bnd length (km)	Boundary status	Encroachment	Level of encroachment	Remarks
1	Kajjansi	297	14.6	Not opened	Permanent buildings, clay factories, medical stores, Uganda clays	100%	Encroachment is by adjacent communities
2	Kalandazi	458	18.9	Not opened	Brick laying, land grabbing	15%	Lubega John is an NFA private tree farmer, he changed the boundary CFR boundary and took part of the land.
3	Kalangalo	337	8.5	Not opened	one permanent building by UPDF	40%	There is a marine PGB, Artillery &SFC barracks
4	Kanjaza	332	14.9	Not reopened	one permanent and one semi-permanent building	15%	the adjacent communities extended the boundary in the CFR demarcated plots and sold
5	Kyewaga	209	6.8	Not reopened	permanent buildings, bricklaying, cultivation	10%	adjacent communities
6	Kitubulu	80	4.7	Not reopened	permanent buildings, the land site at Guda	5%	Entebbe municipality and Wakiso land board landing site
7	Mako	298	16.6	Re-opened	No encroachment		

8	Mugamba	725	20.6	Not reopened	bricklaying, 3 families are staying in CFR	10%	Encroachment by adjacent communities' land grabbers
9	Semumya	728	25.3	Not reopened	Brick laying, sand mining, Cultivation	10%	Encroachment by adjacent communities
10	Walumwanyi	399	19.1	Not- re-opened	stone quarrying, extraction of marram, sand mining, cultivation	10%	There is a person claiming 6 ha of CFR land

4.3.2 Land Titles in Kitubulu Central Forest Reserves

Kitubulu CFR is situated near Entebbe, along the shores of Lake Victoria. It is part of Uganda's network of protected forest reserves, designated for conservation and sustainable use. These reserves play a critical role in preserving biodiversity, protecting water catchments, and providing ecological services.

Land titles in Kitubulu Central Forest Reserve (CFR), exemplify a broader issue of unauthorized land allocation and encroachment on protected forest areas. Kitubulu CFR, like many other forest reserves in Uganda, has faced challenges related to illegal titling. Table 3 provides current land titles found in the reserve and require cancellation.

Table 6: List of titles in Kitubulu Forest Reserve

NO.	Registered Proprietor	Plot No.	Block No./Location	Volume	Folio No.	Size in Hectares
1.	David Hood, Mpigi	7 and 8	Mirza close	LRV, 3160	20	0.193
2.	Deborah Mbabazi Entebbe, Wakiso	18	Katonga Road, Entebbe, Wakiso	LRV, 3079	6	0.383
3.	Megha Industries (U) Ltd	23-25	Kibira Road Entebbe Municipality	LRV, 3079	11	0.458
4.	Megha Industries (U) Limited Entebbe Wakiso	11	Kibira Road, Entebbe Wakiso	LRV, 3079	6	0.383
5.	Megha Industries (U) Ltd	13-17	Kibira Road, Entebbe Municipality	LRV, 3079	13	0.458
6.	Mulkin Enterprises Ltd	6	Miria Close	LRV, 2916	7	0.110
7.	New Nordic (Uganda) Limited	19-21	Kibira Road	LRV, 3348	7	0.514
8.	Tripple Sound	371 &	443	FRV, 4462	22	46.227

	Investment Limited	369				
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4.3.3 Gunda Local Forest Reserve managed by the Wakiso District Local Government

Gunda Forest Reserve is 57 hectares, with 30 hectares being cultivable land and 27 hectares being wetlands. Gazetted in 1932, the forest reserve was categorized as a Local Forest Reserve in 1998. The forest is managed by Wakiso Local Government. It is located in Katabi Town Council. It is heavily encroached on by cattle grazing by Ms. Christine Nabimanya, who was permitted by the RDC, Ms. Rose Kirabira in 2018. The trees planted by Tree Planting permit holders who were assigned by Wakiso Local Government, are constantly destroyed by cows and are now replaced by elephant grass. Before that, the forest was maintained and served the purpose for which it was established – maintaining storms, regulating storm flows, and shielding the lakeshores.

Currently, the forest reserve boundary line is intact but has no buffer between adjacent communities. The grazing of cows continues and prevents natural regeneration and growth of trees, leaving the land bare, save for where planting of elephant grass. The forest has been earmarked for degazettement to establish an Industrial Innovation Center. The District Forestry Office has advised that the forest has to be degazetted first, alternative forest land equivalent in size and biodiversity value acquired and gazette, environment impact assessment carried out, approval by National Environment Management Authority and an instrument degazetting Gunda Forest Reserve issued.

In the 1980s, Gunda Forest Reserve was previously a natural forest but over time, it was encroached. In 1994, it was leased to Mr. Maweno Charles, to plant trees equivalent to 80 hectares. The lease was later canceled in 1997 because forest reserves were not to have lease titles. However, one Free Hold Title belonging to Mr. Kiyaga Geoffrey, Plot 159 block 437 measuring 1.217 ha, issued 20th December 2012 was seen. At that time, there were 12 titles, which were still canceled. A signpost by the Ministry of Water and Environment was installed. Then, a group of youth vandalized it, calling themselves the Juakali, and interest in land grabbing is on the increase. There is an encroacher, Ms. Christine Nabimanya, who keeps cows on the reserve. An expression of interest to plant trees on Gunda Forest Reserve was run. As a result, interested parties were allocated approximately 30 hectares that expire in 2054. There have been reports of Ms. Christine's cows destroying trees. Now, there is a recent interest, communicated by Presidential Advisor, Gilbert Bukenya that the forest is needed to establish an Industrial Innovation Center.



Figure 9: Gunda Forest Reserve

4.3.4 Canceled or not canceled land titles

The cancellation of land titles in Nnonve, Kyewaga, and Kajjansi CFRs are in doubt, believed by National Forestry Authority staff to have been on paper, rather than in the system that manages land titles. A site case is where Mr. Semakula Haruna (listed in the table below), a soldier, who has been challenged by NFA and the permitted Private Tree Planter, over management rights on the same plot of land. The private tree planters, Bagwa Peter and Mr. Kankya Charles, have hired a private surveyor to put the user rights clear. They have since found out that the tree planting permit exists as well as the Plots from Wakiso DLG (see letter in Figure 2). There are also two houses belonging to the family of a deceased soldier, standing in the place where plots were said to be canceled (see Figure 3), and a neighboring firm established by a State House employee. If these were canceled, they should have vacated the forest reserve, or forced out, the way encroachers in Lubigi Wetland are forced to leave, bringing down all structures that the encroacher raised.

For that reason and several others, the NFA has doubts about several of the listed applicants and their titles being canceled. These illegal land titles have caused heavy investment losses to the Private Tree Planters and the NFA who have to patrol the forest reserve continuously.

Table 7: List of land titles claimed to be still active

Applicant	Tenure	Volume	Folio.	Block.	Plot.
Moses Muzeeyi P.O. Box 1615 Kampala	FRV	240	3	226	16
Ndaula Omar, P.O. Box 8391, Kampala	FRV	239	25	226	18
Denis Abasa, P.O. Box 71504, Kampala	FRV	193	23	226	19
Denis Abasa P.O. Box 71504, Kampala	FRV	240	4	226	20
Kashemeza Martin, C/O P.O. Box 71504, Kampala	FRV	240	2	226	22
Phoebe K. Abaasa, P.O. Box 71504, Kampala	FRV	266	11	226	24
Kashemeza Martin	FRV	266	12	226	25
Susan Akantunga	FRV	194	1	226	26
Arinitwe Emmanuel	FRV	240	12	226	28
Semakula Haruna	FRV	240	12	226	44
Ian Kyeyune	FRV	240	5	226	46
Ruth Tumwesigye Nduhukire and Others	FRV	266	6	226	54

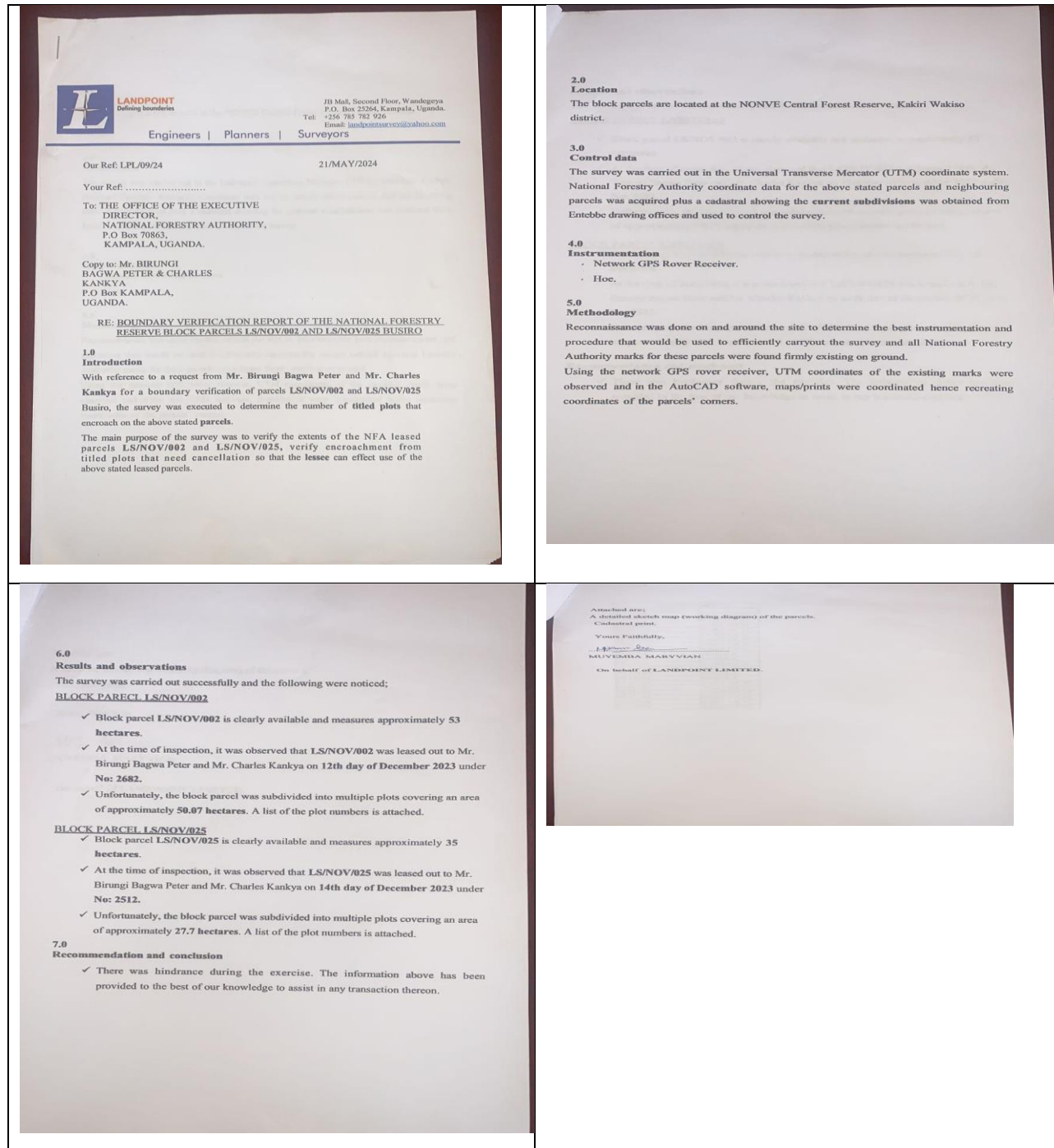


Figure 10: A letter written by a surveyor justifying the existence of a plot in the system



Figure 11: Residence in Nnonve CFR belonging to a former soldier

4.4 Impacts of encroachment and land titles in forest reserves

Forest reserves in Wakiso, Mpigi, Kayunga, Kikuube, Buhweju, Mitooma, Bushenyi, Rubirizi, and Hoima, are facing significant environmental, economic, and social threats due to activities such as land titling, urban settlement, and agricultural expansion. These activities have profound and often detrimental impacts on the environment.

- a) The formalization of land titles leads to the clearing of forested areas for development (e.g. Kitubulu CFR that is fully developed with houses) or agricultural use (for example the establishment of sugar cane by Hoima Sugar in Bugoma CFR). This results in a significant loss of forest cover. Issuance of land titles within forest reserves disrupts habitats and affects wildlife populations (both flora and fauna) that depend on large, undisturbed areas for survival.
- b) Deforestation and forest degradation arising from i land titles and encroachments lead to the loss of both flora and fauna species, some of which may be endemic or endangered (such as Red Colobus Monkeys, and Chimpanzees in Bugoma CFR). The removal of certain tree species (like Mahogany) can disrupt the balance of forest ecosystems, affecting everything from soil health to the prevalence of certain animal species.
- c) Because of degradation arising from encroachment and issuance of land titles in reserves, there is a reduction in ecosystem services such as carbon sinks, absorbing CO₂ from the atmosphere, and the formation of rains. Deforestation reduces this capacity, contributing to increased greenhouse gas levels and climate change. In addition, forests play a critical role in the water cycle, including groundwater recharge and maintaining the flow of rivers and streams. Their removal can lead to altered hydrological patterns and reduced water availability.

d) It also impacts water resources since agriculture, which is the backbone of the economy, requires significant water resources, leading to the extraction of water from rivers, streams, and groundwater sources within forest reserves. This can reduce water availability for forest ecosystems.

e) Encroachment and land titling enhance corruption in Ugandan society, eroding trust in public institutions and governance structures. It undermines the rule of law and perpetuates a culture of impunity. Consequently, it results in inadequate enforcement of land and forest conservation laws which allows illegal titling to persist, further weakening governance and accountability.

f) Encroachment and illegal land titling in forest reserves result in social impacts, affecting the livelihoods, social structures, and well-being of local communities. Forests often contain sites of cultural and spiritual significance and illegal land titling and subsequent development can lead to the destruction of these sacred sites, eroding cultural heritage and identity. Added to that, the loss of access to forest resources undermines the transmission of traditional knowledge and practices related to forest management and conservation.

5. Recommendations for rationalizing the land titling process

The situation with land titles and mapping inaccuracies in Uganda's forest reserves highlights several critical issues that need to be addressed to ensure effective forest conservation and land management. The **Ministry of Lands, Housing, and Urban Development** acknowledges the existence of **land titles in forest reserves** and reports a decrease in such titles. This suggests progress, but the problem is not fully resolved. The maps used to delineate forest reserve boundaries are often **inaccurate**. Discrepancies between these maps and the actual boundaries lead to confusion and potential illegal land claims. **Shapefiles** and other mapping data may not align with current land use and reserve boundaries, contributing to ongoing issues with land management. Forest reserves and land areas are recorded on **different cadastres**, which complicates efforts to reconcile land ownership and usage with protected areas. These discrepancies create a lack of coherence between **official land records and actual land use**, making it difficult to enforce regulations and manage forest reserves effectively. This is compounded by the presence of errors and corruption in land administration and mapping processes exacerbates the problem. Inaccurate data and fraudulent activities undermine the integrity of land management systems and contribute to illegal encroachment and land grabbing.

The Ministry of Lands, Housing, and Urban Development recommends **revising and updating forest reserve maps** to reflect accurate boundaries. This involves using modern geospatial technologies such as **satellite imagery and GIS** to create precise maps. It will also **standardize cadastres** across all land and forest reserve boundaries to ensure consistency and reduce

discrepancies. This can only happen when we implement **stricter oversight and auditing** processes within the Ministry of Lands to prevent corruption and errors in land title issuance and record-keeping.

5.1 Reducing land titles in reserves

- i. There is an overarching request to the government both by the stakeholders and representatives of Ministries, Departments, and Agencies of government, to use guns (as is the case for UWA) as a tool for enforcement in the forest sector, mainly by armed forest supervisors, to maintain order and protect the reserves from illegal activities. Uganda's forest reserves are critical ecosystems, home to vast biodiversity and a source of livelihood for many communities. The management of these reserves faces significant challenges, including illegal logging, encroachment, poaching, and forest degradation. Currently, the level of impunity is high, and the resource can only be managed by the gun.
- ii. One of the actions proposed is to engage the Parliamentary Committee on Natural Resources to address the critical challenges of illegal land titles. The engagement should focus on strengthening legal frameworks including the review of the National Tree Planting Act, improving enforcement mechanisms stated therein, and promoting sustainable management of forest resources. Specifically, the parliamentary committee will be requested to:
 - a. Conduct a national audit of land titles issued within protected areas and forest reserves.
 - b. Amendments laws address loopholes in the land registration process and create stronger penalties for individuals and officials involved in the issuance of illegal titles.
 - c. Identify and revoke illegal land titles in protected forest areas, with clear legal processes for resolving disputes.
 - d. Streamline geospatial mapping and monitoring system that tracks land titling and mapping of the boundaries.
- iii. Engage Physical Planning bodies, especially the District Land Boards and Area Land Committees, that are key in issuing land titles. Illegal land titling should be addressed at the initial stages, therefore the need to sensitize the Area Land Committees to curb the vice of allocating and titling out land on central forest reserves
- iv. Processing land titles in forest reserves in Uganda is illegal and poses significant threats to conservation efforts. Several actors could be involved in this process and should be apprehended. These include district land boards, officials in the **Ministry of Lands, Housing, and Urban Development, land registrars, area land committees, district, and local council leaders, developers, and land brokers among others.**

The issue of land titles within forest reserves (FRs) is a significant challenge to forest conservation and sustainable land management. With over 703 land titles reportedly

found within forest reserves, and 609 verified so far, it highlights serious systemic weaknesses in the land management and verification process. Land titles in forest reserves typically only surface when there are issues, such as conflicts over land use.

- v. The joint opening of internal and external boundaries between tree planters, forest reserves, and neighboring communities, including Collaborative Forest Management (CFM) groups, can play a crucial role in sustainable forest management and conservation. Stakeholder engagements from the National Forestry Authority (NFA), local government, community leaders, and CFM groups to discuss the objectives and benefits of the boundary-opening exercise are crucial. This should emphasize the participation of private tree planters, and ensure that local communities and CFM groups are actively involved in the decision-making process.
- vi. Implementing *joint patrols* between the Uganda Wildlife Authority, National Forestry Authority, and District Forestry Services can significantly reduce illegal activities in forest reserves. This collaborative approach not only strengthens enforcement but also promotes sustainable management and conservation of vital forest ecosystems. This can be enhanced by a centralized system for reporting and monitoring illegal activities and the use of technology such as drones and satellite imagery for surveillance and data collection.
- vii. There should be a representative on the Area Land Committees with a person of higher integrity, a forester, or a person who has forestry at heart. This person should be charged with the approval of land titles that may have a bearing on environmental, or forest-related deforestation and forest degradation.
- viii. In many cases, the judges conclude the land dispute cases without visiting the sites of disputes. In case of disputes involving the issuance of land titles in a reserve, there must be visits to disputed parcels of land in a forest reserve.
- ix. There has been an earlier effort to cancel land titles. To the dismay of the frontline staff of the NFA and DLGs, these titles seem to exist, with buildings still standing on the said land. After the cancellation of land titles in forest reserves, it is important that the NFA implements the orders for destruction, and demolition, and ensures the reinstatement of the forest, requiring careful planning and execution to avoid further conflict and ensure long-term sustainability.

5.2 Handling encroachments in areas under tree planting permits and licenses

Improving the allocation and management of tree planting permits within National Forestry Authority reserves to minimize encroachments involves several strategic and operational measures.

- i. Efforts should be taken to engage the **Parliamentary Committee on Natural Resources** to address the critical issues surrounding the issuance of tree-planting licenses. Specifically, the parliamentary committee will be requested to review the procedures for issuing tree planting licenses, ensuring that they are only granted to individuals or entities with a proven track record of adhering to sustainable forest management practices. The committee should look into streamlining the geospatial mapping and monitoring system that tracks the boundaries and maps of tree planting areas to prevent encroachment into protected areas.
- ii. NFA needs to review and institute new guidelines that are clear, transparent, and accessible. Regularization guidelines should be part of the main guidelines. This includes defining the criteria for eligibility, the application process, and the obligations of permit holders.
- iii. There should be a deliberate effort to designate areas within the central forest reserves for tree planting. As it is today, forest reserves are open to tree planting irrespective of the designated conservation status (whether a production zone, buffer zone, or high conservation area).
- iv. NFA needs to ensure that violations of permit conditions and encroachments are swiftly and effectively addressed. As it is today, the staffing levels are appalling, and where they exist, take long to be paid. They are unable to conduct regular on-ground inspections to ensure compliance and detect early signs of encroachment.
- v. NFA needs to utilize Geographic Information Systems (GIS) and remote sensing technologies to monitor forest reserves in real-time. This helps in detecting encroachments and unauthorized activities quickly. To date, the NFA team at the field level is not trained in the use of GIS, lacks computers, and cannot check illegalities in real-time.
- vi. NFA needs to engage local communities at the reserve-specific level, to attain their participation in the management of the forest reserve. NFA needs to recognize all relevant stakeholders, including local communities, CFM groups, local government, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and other interest groups. NFA needs to ensure that local communities receive tangible benefits from forest management, such as access to non-timber forest products, eco-tourism opportunities, and revenue-sharing agreements. It needs to provide incentives for communities to adopt and maintain sustainable forest management practices, such as grants, subsidies, or payment for ecosystem services (PES). Until communities realize the importance of forests, the management of forests will always be challenging.
- vii. NFA needs to provide training for NFA staff, local authorities, and permit holders on sustainable forest management practices, legal requirements, and the importance of forest conservation, even with meager resources.
- viii. NFA needs to develop a digital platform, such as WhatsApp, for managing tree planters and improving communication.

- ix. Automating the processes related to the application procedure, assessment, and granting of permits, as well as the integration of land information systems, tree planting permit information systems, maps, and attribute data, into an online platform would greatly improve transparency, efficiency, and accessibility. This is the direction NFA is taking. This transition to a digital system is essential for streamlining operations, reducing corruption, and ensuring the sustainable management of forest resources and land in Uganda.
- x. NFA should encourage public-private partnerships, and partnerships with the current tree planters, to develop markets for different tree products, with clear agreements on roles, responsibilities, and benefits.
- xi. NFA should provide incentives for permit holders who comply with regulations, such as financial rewards, recognition, or additional support for their tree planting activities.
- xii. Establish clear legal and regulatory guidelines governing the exchange and transfer of rights of tree planting permits in forest reserves. NFA should ensure that all exchanges and transfers comply with national forestry and tree planting regulations. Such exchanges should be published on notice boards about proposed exchanges and transfers to allow for public comments and objections. It is also possible that NFA defines and enforces penalties for non-compliance with permit conditions.

5.3 Handling encroachments in CFM agreements

Handling encroachments in Collaborative Forest Management (CFM) agreements requires a multi-faceted approach that includes legal, social, and management strategies.

- i. NFA should develop and implement robust enforcement mechanisms to address violations of CFM agreements. This may include fines, penalties, and legal action against encroachers.

6. Conclusion

In conclusion, private tree planters have started abusing their licenses. Some go beyond the limit (the land area assigned), some plant without permits hoping that they will be granted permission to regularize, some claim ownership of the land, especially by residents/citizens, some get involved in charcoal production, others are assigned land that has been already taken either by land titles or land grabbers. This has escalated encroachment if it goes on unaddressed.

The sector is at a crossroads as there seems to be no guidance on the issues to consider going forward. The pricing of Eucalyptus and Pine is going down, which is why they have resorted to charcoal production. We are yet to promote the growing of fast-growing indigenous trees that are more beneficial to the environment. No one knows the next steps. There has been only one national-level engagement of tree planters in the 20 years. The sector can continue planting

without assessing performance in terms of saw log production, market, pricing, and species for planting. The sector should aim to plant indigenous species, diverse commercial tree species, trees such as Macadamia, and other fruit trees.

The sector has been attacked by corrupt people, who grab land in forest reserves for agro-commodities developments like growing sugar cane, and establishment of permanent settlements in forest reserves, citing population increase as the main cause. Concerned parties need to address this by checking on the approval process for the issuance of land titles in forest reserves, improving the judgment of cases related to obtaining land in a forest reserve, and addressing the cancelation of land titles in forest reserves.

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- NFA (2018) Terms and conditions for licensing (regularizing) unauthorized private tree plantations in central forest reserves
- NFA (2017) Guideline for Land Allocation for Private Tree Planting in Central Forest Reserves

8. Appendices

i. List of Interviewees and Focus Group Participants

Director, Natural Forest	Owiny Robert	0782900990		
Director Cooperate Affairs - Legal Officer	Moses Muhumuza		17 th July 2024	Done
Inventories coordinator	Ariani Charles	0772550781	3 rd June 2024	Done
Land Management	Rashid	0776733377	12 th June 2024	Done
Range Manager	Sebugwawo Denis	0782361440		
Wakiso District				
District Forestry Office	Nankya Harriet	0772868154	6 th June 2024	done
Forest Supervisor, Kakiri	Ojandu Charles	0772875787	7 th June 2024	done
Forest Supervisor, Kitubulu, Katabi	Kisakye Edith	0775 361496	10 th June 2024	done

Mpigi District				
District Forest Officer	Micheal Sengendo	0782316018	5 th June 2024	done
Sector Manager	Kibuuka John	0782576320	11 th June 2024	done
Kikube District				
Sector Manager	Obonyo Alex	0778697601	29 th June 2024	done
DFO	Abitegeka Wilfred	0782572408	29 th June 2024	done
Hoima District				
District Forest Officer	Tushabege Stewart	0782163057	29 th June 2024	
Kayunga District				
Forest Supervisor	Busobozi Nicholas		On phone	done
Mitooma district				
Sector Manager, Kalinzu	Sam Barekye	078282762	26 th June 2024	done
Forest Supervisor	John Lourdel	0777428150	24 th June 2024	done
District Forest Officer	Amon	0781795475	24 th June 2024	done
Range Manager	Charles Sabiiti`	0775232361	23 rd June 2024	done
Rubirizi				
DFO Rubirizi	Rhitah Murungi	0782226410	25 th June 2024	done
Sector Manager, KK	Mudini Albert	0782504222	25 th June 2024	Done
Buhwezu				
DNRO/DFO	Ian	0772370492		
Bushenyi				
DFO	Atwebembeire Micheal	0772 594 121	25 th June 2024	done

ii. *Claimants from the survey and boundary opening of Bugoma CFR.*

No	Claimant	Claim	Basis Of Claim
1	Hoima Sugar Limited	5,779.7 hectares (14,281.64 acres) in Kyangwali Estate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Copy of certificate of title (volume HQT887 Folio 12) plot 216 block 2 Buhaguzi • Copy of search statement dated 10th June 2021 • NEMA ESIA certificate • Court judgment arising out of the civil suit No 0031 of 2016 at Masindi
2	Atugonza Francis	1,316 hectares (3,256.78 Acres) of land in Rwempunu	Customary claim coordinates of boundary provided
3	Bitarabbeho Shaban Trading Company Ltd	Approximately 10 acres of land encroached	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Purchase agreements • Land offer from LC1 Mburara Village • Freehold certificate of title Block 2 Bahanguzi Plot 291 approximately 35.84 ha
5	Balihamwe Rajab	150 Acres of customary land in Kabale LC1 Kyererezi	Offer letter from the office of the Omukama
6	Mugenyi Ephramu	About 377,167 hectares (932 acres) of land in Katikara- Ngogoli Kyangwali	Customary land offer from Bunyoro Kitara Kingdom (Bunyoro customary certificate)
7	Rwemers Mazirae Emmy Ofishaki Farm Development Ltd	600 hectares (1482.632 acres at Wairagaza village, Kyangwali sub-county	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Land purchase agreements from the natives • Land inspection fee payment receipts to Hoima DLB • Letter of no objection from NF as per approval of land application (LAN/1204 dated 26th February 2013 • Letter from the secretary of the district land board
8	Byaruhanga Matia Mutekaniza Fred & Isingoma Isaac	517 hectares of land at Nyairongo village	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Land offer from Bunyoro Kitara Kingdom • Land offer from the office of the Omukama
9	Kasaija Serevesti	500 Acres of land in Nyakanyera, Hohwa -Kaseeta	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Land allocation letter from Bunyoro Kitara Kingdom • Offer letter from the office of the Omukama • Payment receipts to Hoima DLB, Purchase agreement

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 10 Court order arising out of MSc application No: 70 of 2017 (civil suit NO 016 of 2015)
10	Tusabomu Gerald, Kiwanuka Richard & Others	500 acres of land in Nyairongo Rwenkobe village Kabwoyasubcounty	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Offer 1 letter from the office of the Omukama • Land allocation from Bunyoro- Kitara kingdom • Court order arising out of MSc application no: 70 of 2017 (civil suit no:016 Of 2015)
11	Rev Joachim Mugisa Ateenyi	150 hectares (370.65 acres) and another 200 acres of land in Katikara – Ngoogoli Kyangwali	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Land offer from the office of the Omukama dated 4//2014 and another dated 14/4/2016 • Land allocation from the Bunyoro Kitara Kingdom dated 21/7/2014 and another dated 22/6/2016 • Application letter from the Omukama of Bunyoro Kitara Kingdom
12	Mustafa Zaidi (M.Z.Gencies Limited)	2000 hectares (4,942 acres) of customary land at Kabwoya 296.5720 hectares (732.83 acres) at Nyangabi Kimbugu 662.3484 hectares (1636.663 acres) at Nyagugu	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grant of customary land awarded to Mustafa Zaidi by the Omukama of Bunyoro Kitara Kingdom. • Copy of certificate of title (volume MAS21 Folio 18) • Plot 115 Block 21 Buhaguzi copy of the certificate of title (volume MAS20 FOLIO 20) Plot 105 Block 21 Buhaguzi • Consent judgment under civil suit number 20 of 2019
13	Tulipona Veteran's Association	2000 acres of customary land at Nyairongo, Kabwooya	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Land allocation from the office of the Omukama • Certification of incorporation of Tulipona
14	Kaganda Muhammadi	60 acres of customary land in Kibale Village, Kyangwali	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Land offer from the office of the Omukama • Lease offer from the county chief, Bunyoro Kitara Kingdom
15	Omuhereza Murungi, Mugisa Murungi & Kushemererwa Murungi	72.969 hectares of land at Ndongo	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Copy of certificate of title (volume HQT248 Folio 22) • Plot 118 Block 4 Buhaguzi • Payment receipt for registration fees • Purchase agreement
16	Ruralya John	500 acres of land in Nyairongo village	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Land offer letter from the office of the Omukama • Land allocation letter from Bunyoro Kitara Kingdom • Court order arising out of MSc application No 70 of 2017 (civil suit No: 016 of 2015)

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Payment receipts for application and land inspection instruction to survey No: MM.6589 dated 5/3/2002
17	Rutaro Francis Exervia	153.632 Hectares, 57.9 hectares & 40.493 hectares of land at Kasindi /kibali	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Copies of certificate of titles (volume HQT237FOLIO 24, Volume HQT 349 Folio 10, and volume HQT 349 Folio 12) • Plots 19, 28 & 29 respectively all of block 21 Buhanguzi • Letters of administration introduction/recognition letter from the LC1 • Lette of no objection from the district forest officer, Hoima • Notice of forest encroachment by NFA
18	Turyamureba Shaban	38.845 Hectares of land at Nyabunende	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Copy of certificate of Title (volume MAS91 Folio 11) Plot 291 Block 2 Buhaguzi • License to harvest timber
19	Bugoma Junglre Lodge	9.311 Ha located in Nyakafunjo	Copy of certificate of the title (vol MAS1 Folio 24) plot 109 Block 21 Buhaguzi
20	Kato Alfred (Kimukyeya Doreen & Kyebambe Ruth)	1,221 acres of customary land at Mandwiga	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduction and Recognition LC 1 Letter • List of coordinates for the boundary • A land offer letter from the Bunyoro Kitara Kingdom addresses an offer of 764.99 ha to Doreen & Ruth.
21	Prince Fred Mugenyi Roland & Others	2sq miles of land located at Katikara – Ngogooli LCs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Land application from the offer letter from the office of the Omukama, Land offer letter from Bunyoro Kitara Kingdom • Memorandum of the lease by Bunyoro Kitara Kingdom Land Board
22	Kyenkya Margaret	342.2 Ha (845.76 acres) at Nsozi	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Copy of certificate of title (volume HQT594 Folio 11 plot 206 & 211, Block 2 Buhaguzi.

i. Focused Group Discussions

Introduction and Warm-Up

1. Introduction:

- Could each participant briefly introduce themselves and their connection to forest reserves or land management?

2. General Perception:

- What are your general thoughts on the current state of Central and Local Forest Reserves in Uganda?

Understanding Encroachment

3. Extent and Nature of Encroachment:

- How would you describe the extent of encroachment in the forest reserves in your area?
- What types of activities are leading to the encroachment of these forest reserves (e.g., farming, settlement, illegal logging)?

4. Causes and Motivations:

- What do you think are the main reasons behind the encroachment into forest reserves?
- Are there socio-economic factors that drive people to encroach on forest land?

Issuance of Illegal Land Titles

5. Prevalence and Process:

- How widespread is the problem of illegal land titles within the forest reserves?
- Can anyone share examples or experiences of how these illegal land titles are issued and by whom?

6. Influence and Actors:

- Who are the key players involved in the issuance of illegal land titles?
- How do local government officials or other authorities influence this process?

Impact Assessment

7. Environmental Impact:

- What environmental impacts have you observed as a result of encroachment and illegal land titling in the forest reserves?

8. Social and Economic Impact:

- How has the encroachment and illegal land titling affected local communities socially and economically?
- Are there conflicts arising from these activities? If so, how are they being addressed?

Policy and Enforcement

9. Regulatory Framework:

- What laws and regulations are in place to protect forest reserves from encroachment and illegal land titling?

- How effective are these regulations in practice?

10. **Challenges in Enforcement:**

- What challenges do enforcement agencies face in preventing encroachment and stopping the issuance of illegal land titles?

- Are there any specific cases or examples where enforcement has been particularly difficult or ineffective?

Mitigation Strategies and Solutions

11. **Current Measures:**

- What measures are currently being implemented to prevent encroachment and illegal land titling?
- Can you share any successful initiatives or programs that have made a positive impact?

12. **Recommendations:**

- What additional steps do you think should be taken to combat these issues?
- How can community involvement be enhanced in protecting the forest reserves?

13. **Role of Technology:**

- How can technology (e.g., satellite monitoring, GIS) help in tracking and preventing encroachment and illegal titling?

- Are there any successful case studies of using technology in this context?

Stakeholder Collaboration

14. **Partnerships:**

- Who are the key stakeholders that need to collaborate to effectively address these issues?
- How can partnerships between government, NGOs, and local communities be strengthened?

15. **Community Engagement:**

- What role do you think local communities should play in the management and protection of forest reserves?

- How can their involvement be more effectively facilitated?

Concluding Thoughts

16. **Future Outlook:**

- What is your outlook on the future of forest conservation in Uganda in light of these challenges?
- What gives you hope, and what concerns you most moving forward?

Final Reflections

17. **Key Takeaways:**

- What are the key points or takeaways from today's discussion?
- Is there anything else anyone would like to add that hasn't been covered?