

# **MUGALU'S FOREST AND ITS USERS**

**A Site Monitoring Report prepared for presentation to the local people and officials  
of Mugalu's Forest**

By

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**July, 2002**

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## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

The UFRIC Research Team is very grateful to: -

- (a) Ford Foundation for the financial support,
- (b) Uganda Government Institutions e.g. UWA, Local Administrations, for the field assistance.
- (c) Local Communities for participating in field activities,
- (d) Faculty of Forestry and Nature Conservation, Makerere University for housing UFRIC.

## **Introduction**

Mugalu's forest is a private forest in Mpigi district. It is located about 25km along Kampala-Mityana road, in Mawokota county- Muduma sub-county. This forest, though initially privately owned by the late Mr. Mugalu, has changed ownership to Major Tumukunde who has converted the forested area into a livestock farm. Major Tumukunde bought the area from Mr. Mugalu's son/ heir, Mr. Sembegujja in 1999. He since fenced off the area, cleared all the trees, introduced cattle and prohibited any trespassing to harvest any product from the area. Thus the area that was ago being used by the residents of Mbazzi settlement five years is now completely inaccessible to them.

## **The History of Mbazzi Settlement of Mugalu's Forest**

Mbazzi settlement is located close to Mugalu's's forest, in Mawokoota County-Muduuma sub-county, Mpigi District. The history of Mbazzi settlement is not clearly known by the present generation. It is believed that the settlement came into existence long around 1800. The first settlers were Kabaka's subjects who he gave land having fought for him. The Kabaka's subjects (the landlords) cultivated cotton and made back-cloth from the *Ficus natalensis* tree. In a bit to grow more cotton the Kabaka's subjects stated employing casual labourers mainly from the Bakiga and Barundi ethnicity. These casual labourers eventually settled in the area and leading to an increase in the population. As time went by, more settlers also came in to grow cotton. The few landlords allocated Bibanja to the rest of the settlers, who used to pay ground rent (Busuulu and Envujjo) to the landlords. The late Mr. Mugalu's father was one of the Kabaka's subject who received more that 200 ha of land, part of which was forested. The present day residents could not establish exactly when the late Mr. Mugalu's father died and hence late Mr. Mugalu's taking over of the land and the forest thereon.

The landlords and the Bibanja owners latter started growing coffee, which was the main cash crop at that time as cotton had declined. The population of the area further grow due to immigration of mainly the Banyankole, Banyarwanda and the Barundi, who came into the area to help the Baganda grow coffee.

In 1990 Mr. Mugalu was killed and his son Mr. Sembegujja took over the property as heir. He worked closely with the widow of Mr Mugalu. They started harvesting the bif trees for timber and also made charcoal in the forest. They too allowed the residents of Mbazzi to cultivate food crops in the area that had been cleared of trees. The residents were also allowed to collect such products as firewood for subsistence use, water and a few used to graze their livestock in the forest. For reasons not known to the residents of Mbazzi, Mr. Sembagujja sold the land and the forest thereon to Major Tumukunde in 1999. The residents of Mbazzi settlement (Plate 1) no longer had access to this area.

## **Demographic and socio-economic characteristics of the settlement**

Since the last visit in 1995, the number of households has increased from 50 to 80 households. The population has in effect increased from 203 to 300 individuals. The male to female ratio is currently 40:60. The average number of people per household has increased from five (5) to six (6).

There are three major religions: Roman Catholics (80%), Moslems (12%) and Protestants (8%). The Baganda (95%), form the majority of the residents and the remaining 5% constitutes the Banyarwanda, Bakiga and Banyankole. Luganda is the commonly spoken language in the settlement. The major occupation for the local residents is subsistence farming of both crops and livestock as opposed to four years ago when crop farming was the main activity. Although Coffee and Bananas were the main cash/food crops in the area, today coffee yields have greatly declined due to the coffee wilt disease. Banana yields have also gone down due to reduced soil fertility and the infestation of the banana weevil. The food crops currently grown include beans, maize, sweet potatoes and cassava. Today, a good number of households possess at least one head of cattle or a pig on the zero grazing basis. The income generating activities have remained selling firewood for both men and women although firewood has become more scarce as a result of Mugaru forest being converted to farm land. Currently, the main source of commercial firewood for the residents is Lwamunda forest reserve, despite the fact that commercial firewood collection in this forest is illegal. Generally, the residents identified only six (6) individual/households regarded as wealthy in the entire settlement. The local people's definition of wealth was the possession of land (Kibanja) containing bananas, coffee and on which one can grow food enough for family consumption all year round; and possession of livestock and a permanent house.

### **Land ownership and use**

Land tenure in the settlement is 'Mailo' and all of the residents own 'Bibanja'. Bibanja have been exchanged either through giving away as gifts, selling or inheritance within the patrilineal kinship lineage. The Bibanja are individually owned and the local people who own livestock have no communal grazing lands. More than five years ago, some residents used to graze their animals in the grassland patches within Mugaru's forest. Today, no resident's animal grazes in this forest. The average land holding per household is about one hectare. The soils in the settlement are mainly clay-loams of relatively low fertility, thus producing low yields, though the climate is ideal for farming.

In addition to agricultural crops, almost all farmers keep local breed poultry. Cattle were popular with men, while pigs were more popular with women. Cattle were ranked the most important by all residents because they provide milk, meat, hides, cash, prestige and are used for traditional ceremonies such as marriage. Cattle are also viewed as a bank for money, as they can easily be sold off at the time of need for large sums of cash. The pigs were ranked second as they take a short time to mature and also provide quick cash when sold. Poultry was ranked third most important by the residents because they have no management costs and can easily be sold for cash.

Reduced yields and the low prices of coffee have greatly reduced household income as the majority of the local people have for a long time depended on the sale of coffee. Thus the residents have continued to rely on illegal harvesting of firewood for sale from the nearby government forest reserve. More than 50% of all houses in the settlement are permanent- constructed with bricks and roofed with iron sheets.

## **Mugalu's Forest**

Mugalu's Forest originally covered about 150 ha, and was located at an altitude of 1150 meters above sea level. The forest was cleared in 1999 for livestock farming and less than 10 ha of forested area remain. **This area is now broadly classified as farmland with scattered trees of predominantly .....** State the dominant tree species and add more of what is observed in the forest currently.

### **The chronology of events in Mbazzi settlement**

- 1900-1925                      The area was inhabited by the Baganda who were subjects of the Kabaka of Buganda. The late Mr. Mugalu takes over the custody of his father's property including the forest after his father's death.
- 1930-1946:                      Population increased due to immigrants who come from the neighbouring country Burundi and Rwanda. The Banyankole and Bakiga also came in and all these immigrants were helping the Baganda to grow bananas and cotton. These immigrants later settled in Mbazzi permanently. Settlers started growing coffee, as this was the major cash crop due to the decline in cotton returns.
- 1979:                              The civil war that ousted President Idi Amin Dada. The effects of this civil war were not greatly felt by the local residents.
- 1980-1986:                      Civil war that brought President Museveni into power. Many people moved out of the village due to insecurity.
- 1987-1994:                      People returned to the settlement, population increased and forest products harvesting (timber/pitsawing and charcoal making) started. These lead to the development of some permanent houses in the settlement.
- 1995:                              Decline in crop productivity and intensification of forest products harvesting activities.
- 1996:                              Universal Primary Education (UPE) was introduced, which eased the burden of education children in the settlement.
- 1998:                              Coffee wilt disease attacked coffee plants and the yields drastically dropped.
- 1999:                              Mugalu's forest was sold to Major Tumukunde, who fenced it off for livestock farming and cut all the trees. He too restricted access by local residents to cultivate and collect water from the area.
- 2000-2002:                      Increased water scarcity and increased distance for water collection.

Increased poverty due to reduced household incomes, which is a result of reduced crop yields and denied access to cultivable land in the forest hence a lack of surplus crops for sale.

Increased population.

### **User Groups and Forest Products**

The fact that Mugalu's forest changed ownership and land use, residents of Mbazzi no longer harvest any thing from this area. Although the residents of Mbazzi used to harvest firewood for both domestic and commercial purposes and also cultivate within the forest as well as harvest timber more than five years ago, these activities have all been terminated. Today, there is no single user group in this area and neither is any product harvested from this area. The only user of the area is the owner who grazes his animals on the farm.



*Plate 1 Some residents of Mbazzi settlement who used Mugalu's Forest before 1999.*

## **Conclusions and Recommendations**



**Appendices**

**Appendix 1 Mugalu's Forest Master Species List**

**Botanical Name**

**Local Name**

**Appendix 2 The main species in the ground cover – Mugalu’s Forest**

<b>Botanical Name</b>	<b>Local Name</b>	<b>Appearance (No. of Plots)</b>	<b>Ground Cover</b>	
			<b>Plot Mean Percentage</b>	<b>Seedlings</b>
<i>Cyperus rotundus</i>	Unknown	5	4.2	H
<i>Digitaria sp.</i>	Kokombut	4	3.5	H
<i>Kikuyu Grass</i>	Unknown	4	22.7	H
<i>Desmodium sp.</i>	Kumayet	7	8.7	H
<i>Commelina sp.</i>	Krastit	7	1.9	H
<i>Oxalis corniculata</i>	Unknown	2	17	H
<i>Hibiscus sp.</i>	Mutushet	6	6.8	H
<i>Cyanthea sp.</i>	Toroyontet	5	9.2	H
<i>Britaria sp.</i>	Nyariret	13	14.4	H
<i>Momordic foetida</i>	Unknown	1	6	H
<i>Acanthus pubescens</i>	Tekelyo	8	6.7	20
<i>Syzygium guinense</i>	Unknown	1	10	12
<i>Phytolaca dodecandra</i>	Sokotit	4	7.8	H
<i>Acalypha sp.</i>	Chepchapay	3	4.7	H
<i>Chrysophyllum vitellinum</i>	Zikamama	3	6.7	H
<i>Neoboutonia macrocalyx</i>	Chebakwa	3	2	5
<i>Vernonia auriculifera</i>	Tobongwo	5	3.6	11
<i>Dombeya sp.</i>	Porowomey	1	4.5	3
<i>Drymaria cordata</i>	Namungokokoy	4	3.8	H
<i>Oxalis latifolia</i>	Unknown	3	2.3	H
<i>Aningeria adolfi-friedericii</i>	Muna	3	2.3	5
<i>Albizia ferruginea</i>	Swesut	2	25	20
<i>Coleus barbatus</i>	Angurwo	2	7.5	H
<i>Senna sp.</i>	Unknown	1	10	H
<i>Bidens pilosa</i>	Namchikong	2	1.5	H
<i>Catha edulis</i>	Tumeyondet	1	5	1
<i>Impatiens buttonii</i>	Unknown	1	2	H
<i>Kyllingia erecta</i>	Unknown	1	30	H
<i>Nyondo</i>	Unknown	1	2	H
<i>Cyathula uncinulata</i>	Sirmitit	1	5	H
<i>Hagenia abyssinica</i>	Namkejer	1	2	1
<i>Celtis africana</i>	Masiteti	1	2	2

### **Appendix 3 Attendance list for Mbazzi PRA**

1. Mukasa A.H
2. Ssembajjwe Robert
3. Bakeine Habert
4. Bbiti David
5. Rukundo Lazaro
6. Ssegujja Isa
7. Vincent
8. Joseph
9. Ssebowa
10. Tamale John
11. Kisakye L.
12. Lumbuye V.
13. Mugwanya Tony
14. Nabagala Agnes E.
15. Nakibuuka Madalena
16. Nabatanzi Koleta
17. Nampiima Fisita
18. Mrs Ssenyonjo
19. Nalwadda Theresa
20. Namuyomba Betty
21. Namwandu Sserwaniko Nakakaawa
22. Asasiibwe Enid
23. Nakiregga Maria
24. Nazziwa Jane
25. Nanyonga Sala
26. Kibirige Alex
27. Nabankema Monica
28. Mrs Lubwama Tamale Teddy
29. Kategaya Loy