

AN ECONOMIC VALUATION OF ALTERNATIVE WETLAND USES TO THE

LOCAL COMMUNITY A CASE OF NAMATALA WETLAND

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Abstract

The study sought to identify, quantify, value and compare the economic value of alternative wetland uses to the Namatala wetland adjacent community. The study drew on primary data obtained from households, and use market and contingent valuation techniques to establish the economic value of Namatala wetland.

Market valuation results indicate high net monetary value of Namatala wetland to the local community, worth Uganda Shillings 487,879,340 for papyrus harvesting, 396,601,920 for wood fuel harvesting, 2,914,617,940 for grazing, 5,257,980,000 for fishing and 65,377,000 for paddy rice cultivation. This is comparable with the contingent valuation results which estimate the monetary value at Uganda Shillings 9,041,500,000 or 6,027,667 US\$ annually.

The findings of the study led to the conclusion that Namatala wetland has high economic value and degradation through conversion involves a high socio-economic cost in terms of foregone wetland goods and services. The study findings also reveal that conversion inconsistent wetland uses, contrary to the perception of the local community. This is due to the high labour cost involved.

The findings of this study provide an economic justification and niche for policy makers to prioritize conservation of wetland ecosystems in Uganda, through appropriate policies and programmes that promote empowerment of the local community to manage the wetland resources sustainably.