

TUMWESIGYE .K. ANTHONY (2003-MA-DL-035)

**Deforestation and Livelihoods-Examining the Effects of Deforestation on Rural Livelihoods:
A Case study of Maliba Sub-County, Kasese District.**

Deforestation means reduction or loss of the biological and economic productivity of forests and woodlands resulting from land use or a combination of processes arising from human activities. Forests are important habitats for biodiversity and provide crucial eco-system services in terms of soil and watershed protection and the economic value of the numerous products and services they provide. Worldwide, 1.6 billion people depend on forests to some extent while over 60 million indigenous people depend directly on forests for their survival. However, forests are under pressure due to deforestation. Uganda's forest cover has halved during the past century, and currently is shrinking at a rate of 55,000 hectares per year (FAO, 2004). The loss of forested areas upsets soil-water relations, contributes to global warming, brings erosion, and lowers water quantity and quality which affects human health. People gather medicinal plants, fuel wood and derive food from the forests to support their livelihoods hence the loss of these habitats leads to a lower quality of life. Despite these effects, no factual information is readily available about the effects deforestation on the livelihoods of the local communities, in this case in Maliba sub-county. This study set out to determine the impact of deforestation on the livelihoods of local communities in the sub-county. It focused on the causes of deforestation and its effects, challenges of combating deforestation and possible mitigation measures. The study found out that forests are a source of products such as firewood for domestic use and sale, poles for construction, charcoal mainly for sale, food (fruits, honey and mushrooms), medicinal plants, game meat and hand craft materials. More still, forests provide employment and protect soil from erosion, increase soil fertility and are important for water catchment and tourism, cultural values and climatic amelioration. All these support the livelihoods of the majority of the local communities.

Cutting of forests for agricultural expansion, firewood extraction for domestic and industrial uses, pit sawing for timber, and cutting of trees for poles and charcoal are the leading causes of deforestation. Others are poor extension services, corruption and population increase, lack of alternatives to wood resources, over harvesting due to poor planning, poverty, indirect nature of conservation benefits, weak regulation and enforcement of existing laws and policies, urbanisation and industrial growth, and inappropriate processing technologies. Decreased availability of forest products, increased erosion, gullies and bare lands, decreased agricultural production, decrease in water quality and quantity, increased landslides and floods, loss of biodiversity, increased temperatures, and decline in revenues, increased incidences of diseases, increase in prices of the forest products are some of the effects of deforestation that negatively impact on the livelihoods of the local communities in the sub-county. The study recommends empowering of National Forestry Authority and District Forestry Services, by government and conservation organisations to implement policies and plans through capacity building and provision of adequate resources, promotion of alternatives, sustainable utilisation, promotion of alternative sources of income, and linking the agencies to carbon markets for more funds as some of the mitigation measures to combat the effects of deforestation on local communities' livelihoods.

Key Words: Deforestation, Rural Livelihoods, Kasese District.