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The Influence of Human Activities on the Functioning of the Wetland Ecosystem in Rubindi Sub-county, Mbarara District

The study was carried out to assess the influence of human activities on the functioning of the wetland ecosystem in Rubindi sub-County, Mbarara district. The study was guided by these objectives, to find out the human activities that are taking place in the wetland ecosystems of Rubindi sub-county, to establish the extent of human activities carried out in the wetland ecosystem in Rubindi subcounty and to find out the effect of the human activities on the wetland ecosystems functions in Rubindi sub-county. The researcher used both qualitative and quantitative research designs to collect data from the field. The researcher used key informants, Farmers, Religious Leaders, political leaders and traders in Rubindi sub-county as study respondents while a representative sample of 122 respondents was used to represent the entire study population. Focus group discussions, transect walk, questionnaires, and interview guides were used as tools of data collection for primary data while secondary data made use of documents and other written sources that the researcher identified to get current information regarding the study. The study concluded that human activities influence the functioning of wetland ecosystems both negatively and positively. Positively, the human activities influence the functioning of wetland ecosystems mainly through such activities as; gathering, tourism, fishing and art and crafts while negatively it is mainly through such activities as waste disposal, urbanisation, mining and farming operations which include; overgrazing, overharvesting, continuous bush burning, construction of drainage channels, use of invasive species as well as dumping. The study further concluded that there are many more human activities with a negative influence on the functioning of the wetland ecosystem than those with positive influence and that this is why wetland encroachment increasing. The study recommended that techniques of wetland conservation will improve as scientists gather more information about the processes that take place in wetlands and about the similarities and differences among the functions of different types of wetlands. In order to develop public support and to encourage enlightened policy decisions and regulations, it is critical to create and maintain a data base of wetland characteristics in which the data is kept reliable, comparable, and repeatable at periodic intervals in order to monitor long-term trends.

Key words: Wet lands, Ecosystem, Urbanization