



THE INTERNATIONAL DAY OF FORESTS CELEBRATIONS

Dialogue Theme: Save a Tree, Save a Future

Organized by Environmental Alert and Makerere University School of Forestry

Presentation

Evidence based advocacy for good governance in forestry: The role of Academia and Civil society

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March 21, 2013

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What is advocacy?

Advocacy is a political process by an individual or group which aims to influence Public Policy and Resource allocation decisions within political, economic and social systems and, institutions. The motivation for advocacy can be moral, ethic, faith principles and or desire to protect an asset of interest. Strategies engaged include among others, Media campaigns, public speaking, commissioning and publishing research, filling amicus briefs (testimonies, legal opinion or learned treatise), lobbying (direct approach to legislators on an issue) and social media (to facilitate civic engagement and collective action).

Purpose of Advocacy

- To promote or reinforce change in Policy/Programme or Legislation
- To gain support from others and create supportive environment.

Forest governance issues where advocacy is needed or is being done

A forest is defined as land spanning more than 0.5 hectares with trees taller than 5 metres and canopy cover of more than 10%, or the trees able to reach these thresholds *in-situ* (FAO, 2010). Forest governance refers to how decisions are made about the management and use of forest lands and resources (<http://www.wri.org/project/governance-of-forests-initiative>). Poor forest governance for example is characterized by low levels of transparency, accountability, and public participation in decision-making, as well as weak coordination across different sectors and levels of government. These cause unplanned forest conversion, conflict over forest resources, illegal logging, and corruption. These problems curtail the achievement of sustainable and equitable management of forests. (*In Uganda do we experience/have them all?*)

Governance of Forests Initiative, a global network of CSOs uses a number of indicators (Tenure of Forest Land and Resources, Coordination of Land Use, Forest Institutions and Decision-Making and, Forest Management and Law Enforcement) to evaluate forest governance against a set of ideal benchmarks/best practices that defines good governance. They,

- Carry out evidence-based assessments of forest governance
- Develop practical solutions to the identified governance challenges, and
- Based on the information and evidence they generate, they engage in constructive dialogues with governments and other forest stakeholders to advance governance reforms/improve forest governance.

Forest Governance in Uganda

Forests occupy 17% of Uganda's total land area.

But over 60% of Uganda's forests are in private land owned by individuals or institutions and the remaining constitute central forest reserves (506) under the National Forest Authority and, district forest reserves managed by local government.

- Weak implementation/enforcement of the subsector policies and laws.
- Resources/funding to institutions mandated to manage forests are inadequate.
- The sub sector, is given low priority in government development plans/budgeting.
- In part due to insufficient information/data on its roles/contribution to national development and environment well being.

(Take for example Mabira Give Away event; Government asked academia/CSOs for evidence to prove sugar cane growing was not the best alternative land use to the Forest?).

So is there need for the Academia and Civil Society to play active role in evidence based advocacy for good forest governance in Uganda?

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