



**Ministry of Water and Environment**  
**National Forestry Authority**  
**Uganda Wildlife Authority**

**Investing in Forests and Protected Areas for Climate-Smart Development Project**  
**Social and Conflict Analysis**

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## **Acknowledgements and Disclaimer**

*This Social and Conflict Analysis of Protected Areas Management has been conducted by the Ministry of Water and Environment (MWE) as part of their environmental and social risk assessment required under World Bank funding for the Investing in Forests and Protected Areas for Climate-Smart Development project. The data was collected and analysed by a team, including specialized consultants, from the MWE, working with staff of the Uganda Wildlife Authority (UWA) and National Forestry Authority (NFA). The team is grateful to the participating communities and NFA and UWA staff, who generously provided their time for essential consultations.*

*The Government of Uganda produced and disclosed this report of the analysis in a good faith attempt to identify and avoid inter-personal conflict in its Protected Areas, including, but not only, in areas where the World Bank funded project is located. Reported allegations of conflict are included to illustrate affected parties' perception of associated social risks, but do not imply any verification of the incidents described.*

## Abbreviations

**CD** – Community Dialogue

**CFM** – Collaborative Forest Management

**CFR** – Central Forest Reserve

**CRM** – Collaborative Resource Management

**DFO** – District Forest Officer

**ESIA** – Environmental and Social Impact Assessment

**FGD** – Focus Group Discussion

**GBV** – Gender-Based Violence

**GOU** – Government of Uganda

**GRC** - Grievance Redress Committee

**GRM** – Grievance Redress Mechanism

**IDI** – In-Depth Interview

**IFPA-CD Project**– Investing in Forests and Protected Areas for Climate-Smart Development Project

**HWC** – Human Wildlife Conflict

**KII** – Key Informant Interview

**LC** – Local Council

**MWE** – Ministry of Water and Environment

**MoU** – Memorandum of Understanding

**NFA** – National Forestry Authority

**NFTPA** – National Forestry and Tree Planting Act

**NFTPR** – National Forestry and Tree Planting Regulations

**NGO** – Non Governmental Organisation

**NP** – National Park

**NTFP** – Non-Timber Forest Product

**PA** – Protected Area

**PAA** – Protected Area Authority

**QENP** - Queen Elizabeth National Park

**SCA** – Social and Conflict Analysis

**SFPs** – Standard Forestry Practices

**SOP** – Standard Operating Procedure

**SO** – Standing Order

**UPDF** – Uganda People’s Defence Force

**UWA** – Uganda Wildlife Authority

**VGRC** – Village Grievance Redress Committee

**WR** – Wildlife Reserve

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## Summary of main findings

This Social and Conflict Analysis (SCA) was prepared in the context of the implementation of the Investing in Forests and Protected Areas for Climate-Smart Development Project (IFPA-CD project).

This analysis was commissioned by the Ministry of Water and Environment (MWE) to assess the nature and extent of conflicts between Uganda Wildlife Authority (UWA) and National Forestry Authority (NFA) staff and local communities around protected areas (PA) (national parks (NP), wildlife reserve (WR), and central forest reserves (CFR)) in the IFPA-CD target landscapes, so that its key findings can be used to inform the implementation of IFPA-CD Project.

The main objective of this analysis was to assess the pattern of conflicts between UWA and NFA staff and local communities. Specifically, the analysis sought to: establish the nature and extent of enforcement-related conflict between UWA/NFA and local communities; explore whether allegations or perceptions of misconduct by UWA and NFA are real and widespread in the project areas or local or adjacent communities, or limited to specific locations; assess the existing infrastructure and capacities for handling conflicts (grievance management systems) with a view to recommending ways of reducing conflicts and misperceptions; assess the NFA's Standing Orders and UWA's Standard Operating Procedures in view of law enforcement by the respective institutions; and provide a practical strategy to deal with future cases of misconduct.

The fieldwork for this analysis was conducted between December 2022 and March 2023 and covered select PAs in the Albertine Rift and West Nile, including project and non-project PAs. The interviews focused on allegations and perceptions of incidents since 2020, the year when the IFPA-CD project was approved.

The analysis employed a multiple case study design, in which qualitative methods were used to examine the links between the personal, social, behavioral, organizational, cultural, and environmental factors in a conflict situation in the different IFPA-CD project sites as well as landscapes in the Central, Northern and Southern regions that are not part of the IFPA-CD project. The areas of focus for this assignment were purposefully selected to have a geographical coverage deemed to provide a mix of conditions valuable in the review of patterns of conflict between UWA and NFA staff and local communities. The analysis' sites were selected to combine NPs, WRs and CFRs in each of the three regions. The focus areas were selected based on the presence of the PAs in the sub-regions, being part of IFPA-CD, biodiversity and tourism importance, potential for conflicts, and cultural or ethnic differences, as confirmed by the project Focal Persons representing UWA and NFA and selected District Forest Officers (DFO). CFRs were selected to have a mix of both natural and plantation-forest reserves. Altogether, 18 protected areas (PAs) were visited, including 6 NPs, 9 CFRs, and 3 WRs.<sup>1</sup> The data was collected using different methods, mainly documentary review, in-depth interviews (IDI), focus group discussions (FGD), community dialogues (CD) and key informant interviews (KII), which were corroborated and interpreted for convergence, differences and combinations. The IDIs, FGDs and CDs were conducted with local communities, while the KIIs targeted staff of MWE, NFA, UWA, district or local government technical persons, local leaders and civil society or non-governmental organizations (NGOs). Up to 30 FGDs, 44 KIIs, 18 community dialogue meetings and 12 individual IDIs were conducted in all the three regions (see table in annex 2).

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<sup>1</sup> Two of these PAs are not included under the Project.

## **Key Findings**

### ***Nature and extent of enforcement related conflicts***

Despite the considerable benefits of PAs to local communities, some degree of conflict over resources is inevitable, because of continuing demand for additional PA resources.

The findings show that the conflicts between UWA/NFA and all the adjacent communities visited revolve around three main areas for which PA authorities (PAA) have to enforce laws to ensure compliance: (i) regulating local communities' access to resources within the PAs; (ii) enforcement to respect boundaries between the PAs and local communities; and (iii) actions aimed at managing wildlife incursions on adjacent communities (also known as human-wildlife conflict).

Regarding local communities' access to resources within the PAs, resources such as timber and non-timber forest products (NTFPs), animal products such as hides and skins, horns and scales are important for the livelihoods of communities adjacent to the PAs. The major sources of conflict here arise from communities collecting or accessing resources illegally (especially timber) and engaging in prohibited activities such as poaching, logging without permits or concessions, entering the conservation areas outside of the permitted days and times, and collecting resources such as herbs, firewood, honey and thatch grass in excess of the permitted amounts. All of these activities generate tensions between the communities and PA enforcement authorities.

Boundary disputes are often driven by individuals seeking personal gains, illegal settlers, or politicians leveraging the issue for political gain.

Incursions by wildlife, including fatal attacks by wild animals and destruction of crops and property, were widespread across all regions. The management of these incursions often led to confrontations between communities and PAA staff.

### ***Perceptions of Misconduct by UWA and NFA Enforcement Staff***

Communities reported cases of misconduct by UWA and NFA staff in all the PAs visited; communities also reported misconduct by the community members themselves. Only a handful of incidents of alleged misconduct were reported from any single PA. In total, 91 such cases over the three-year period (2020-2022) in the 18 PAs were reported during fieldwork (see table 4). These fall into eight categories: five of these (confiscation and destruction of property; violent/brutal/indecent arrests; corruption; verbal abuse; and torture) were spread across the three regions; sexual violence and verbal abuse were mainly reported in the Northern region; and stage-managed trespass of domestic animals was reported in the Southern region.<sup>2</sup> Reports of serious violence are not common.

Destruction of property where it occurred was a result of improperly conducted processes of tracing illegally collected resources, but also failure of the suspects to cooperate. Most of the alleged misconduct at NFA sites is by the military officers attached to the field teams to support law enforcement. Relatedly, most of the cases of inappropriate arrests, beating and illegal detention was reported to arise from community members carrying out illegal activities or collecting resources at wrong times in the PAs or

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<sup>2</sup> Abusive behavior is either physical or verbal and reportedly occurs during enforcement action (arrest or detention); Improper conduct not associated with enforcement action includes improper use of firearms, drunken behavior, verbal abuse, and inappropriate sexual relations; Corrupt behavior includes acts of soliciting / accepting bribes and nepotism.

resisting lawful arrests as provided for by the National Forestry and Tree Planting Act (NFTPA) (2003) and Uganda Wildlife Act (2019).

All the forms of misconduct reported in recent times related to enforcement of laws restricting access to the forests and parks and resources within. There seems to be a lack of a shared understanding of what constitutes legal and illegal enforcement activities and what actions PA staff are and are not permitted to carry out, e.g., with regard to confiscation of property and the legality of night or harsh arrests.

Actions by PA officers, even if legal, are in some cases likely to be resented and opposed by local community members. This is also because many of these community members are not aware of the laws, Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) and Standing Orders (SO) under which the PA officers operate.

### ***Perceptions of Misconduct by Communities towards UWA and NFA staff***

It was reported that local communities also engaged in misconduct, including petty corruption, stealing and destruction of PA property, verbal abuse, physical violence, and even threats or acts of killing enforcement staff. Petty corruption, such as bribery and kickbacks, was the most widespread form of misconduct by local communities, seeking to compromise agency staff, so they are able to engage in illegal activities. Stealing and destruction of agency property is also common and usually targets staff deemed uncooperative who are also verbally abused and beaten.

### ***Community Engagements, Collaborative Resource Management (CRM) / Collaborative Forest Management (CFM)***

Although the SCA focuses on conflicts, positive developments were also documented. Collaborative resource use agreements are appreciated by many local stakeholders, and those who have sustained damages from wildlife incursions are increasingly being compensated as provided for in the revised Wildlife Act.

Several efforts have been made by PAAs to sensitize park-adjacent communities on the importance of sustainable management of wildlife and natural resources. It should also be noted that relations between PAAs and communities are also strengthened through social gatherings (weddings, funerals, cultural events) which provide avenues of mutual support and interactions that reduce conflicts and promote peaceful co-existence.

Whereas agreements have been signed with some of the communities to allow regulated access under CRM and in CFM compartments of forest reserves, most were not being implemented as per their design. Some agreements had since expired and were yet to be renewed, but in many cases the parties (UWA/NFA staff and local people on their part) were not respecting the provisions of the agreements. For example, even when being monitored local people attempted to collect more than the allowed resources, collected resources outside the agreed days and times and entered the parks/forests with disallowed tools. Some CFM/CRM committee members were non-functional, corrupt and engaged in illegal activities. On the other hand, most communities appreciated the need to keep additional resources off the list to conserve natural resources for longer term sustainability and access. The project support to CRM and CFM should take these weaknesses into account.

### ***Existing Infrastructure and Capacity to Handle Conflicts***

The findings of the SCA revealed that there are some platforms which can be used to prevent, resolve, reconcile and transform conflicts between PA enforcement and adjacent communities. These include social platforms and events such as community meetings that attract mass gatherings of people, many of which UWA/NFA use to share information for awareness raising with communities to prevent conflicts.

Infrastructure for handling latent conflict includes the community conservation unit in UWA, which works closely with resource use committees established under the CRM agreements (memoranda of understanding (MoU) that themselves provide for handling of conflicts between the parties, such as disciplining resource users, and arbitration in cases of failure to resolve a dispute. There are also CFM arrangements in CFRs, with committees that perform similar roles as those of the resource user committees of UWA.

The findings show that Village Chairpersons are the first and key persons of local governments approached in preventing, resolving, reconciling and transforming conflicts in all the PAs. In terms of capacity to handle conflicts, the main actors are local leaders particularly the LC1 chairpersons who are generally recognized as first contact government structures to handle any grievance in a village; resource use committees guided by Community Conservation Rangers who attend any grievance redress or conflict resolution meeting; other UWA staff and NFA staff (supervisor and manager). Unfortunately, most of the local leaders and collaborative resource management committee members have not received training in handling conflicts and are less empowered in this regard. Only a few UWA and NFA staff have received training on conflict resolution.

Where collaborative resource use agreements exist (under both CRM and CFM), the agreements have provisions for handling conflicts between the parties. The **resource-use committees** under CRM in the case of UWA and CFM in the case of NFA are identified within the respective agreements as key actors in conflict resolution. However, the committee members interviewed reported having received no training in handling conflicts.

### ***Standing Orders and Standard Operating Procedures (SOP)***

The NFTP (2003), National Forestry and Tree Planting Regulations (2016) and Human Resource Manual (2020) make sufficient general provisions for NFA law enforcement and staff management. However, up to date Standing orders are needed to guide the day-to-day operations of law enforcement. The current Uganda Forestry Standing Orders and Administrative Policies (UFSOAP), 1997 were designed to address the forestry department context at the time and do not specifically address the CFRs which are directly under the management of NFA.

UWA's SOPs on the other hand are more contextualized but are largely unknown by local communities, who continue to engage in illegal and other detrimental activities. Some UWA staff also conduct their activities in contravention of the stipulated SOPs. Specific gaps identified relate to insufficient emphasis on two-way communication with communities and lack of clear mechanisms for reporting and addressing alleged misconduct.

### **Recommendations**

All forms of misconduct on the side of the PA and communities require a comprehensive strategy of recognition, cooperation, communication, conflict resolution and community building. Based on these findings, it is important that all key actors in the conflicts in all PAs are sensitized on the relevant laws and policies, but with more emphasis on the adjacent communities and their leaders. It is also important to

train both UWA/NFA staff and local communities in aspects such as communication skills, conflict resolution and transformation, inter alia. This will help improve community understanding of enforcement procedures and reduce illegal activities.

UWA and NFA should utilize existing social platforms and events for regular communication and awareness-raising to prevent conflicts.

If appropriately set up or strengthened, CRM /CFM groups would be a sustainable tool to reduce conflict over access to and utilization of PA resources, but these groups would have to be closely supported. It is recommended to undertake analysis of the performance of the CFM and CRMs in reducing conflict and illegal activities on PAs in IFPA-CD areas. It is important to continue strengthening the existing CRMs and CFMs and instituting them where nonexistent.

The SOPs and SOs could be improved. SOPs, for example, provide minimum avenues for two-way communication and collaboration with the communities. SOPs/SOs focus primarily on conflicts over wildlife/forest management and pay less attention to other sources of conflicts, especially the forms of misconduct carried out by PAA officers.

Trainings should be supported for the PA staff and community leaders regarding conflict resolution and knowledge of the laws and policies relating to community conservation.

## Section I: Introduction

This report presents the key findings of a SCA that has been prepared in the context of the implementation of the World Bank funded IFPA-CD project. The SCA focuses on getting a better understanding of the sources of conflict between protected area enforcement by the NFA and UWA and PA-adjacent communities in the general project landscape of Albertine Region and West Nile, including but not limited to protected areas covered by the project.

### Project Background and Context

The Project's geographical focus is on the Albertine Rift area (which is one of the most important regions for biodiversity conservation in Africa), the West Nile region, and Lamwo district. In this context, the project targets both Wildlife PAs (including NPs and WRs), managed by UWA, and CFRs, managed by NFA. The protected areas of this part of the country contain many globally threatened species and attract more than 80% of the leisure tourists in Uganda. The Albertine Rift has more variety of vertebrate and invertebrate species than any other region on the continent and therefore contains many high value global conservation priority sites harboring a variety of mammals, birds, reptiles, amphibians and butterfly species. Some of the globally threatened mammals in the region include the eastern (mountain) gorilla, the golden monkey, red colobus monkey and the Ruwenzori otter shrew.

Tourism foreign exchange earnings have been growing in recent years, although they were severely impacted by the downturn in international travel during the COVID-19 emergency. Nature-based tourism generates significant revenue which benefits the local and national economies. According to the Netherlands Centre for the Promotion of Imports from developing countries (CBI, 2020), in 2018, two years prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, over 1.5 million international tourist arrivals and a growing number of domestic tourists contributed 7.75% of Uganda's GDP and 6.7% of total national employment. Tourism earned Uganda \$1.6 billion in the 2018-2019 financial year (World Bank 2020), but due to slow recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic, the earnings dropped to \$736 million in 2022 (UTB, 2023).

There remains, however, a need to diversify the range of tourism products available. The Uganda tourism sector is lacking comprehensive product development, resulting in overdependency on gorilla visits, savannah game drives and rafting based in Jinja. A wider range of high-quality tourism products would be beneficial to the entire sector. Both UWA and NFA recognize that more value could be generated from PAs through tourism infrastructure and facilities which include, among others, visitor centers, tracks, trails, bridges and boardwalks. Both UWA and NFA foresee the development of new and improved tourism products such as canopy walks, bird viewing hides and platforms and cable cars, among others, to enhance diversification of tourism activities. There is a need for the government to further invest in tourism infrastructure in forest and wildlife PAs to increase tourism revenue and create alternative livelihoods for members of PA-adjacent communities. Tourism is an important contributor to local economic development - \$1 of expenditure by a foreign tourist generates, on average, \$2.5 of GDP—the total impact includes the indirect value added along the supply chain plus the induced effects of households spending the wages generated.<sup>3</sup> The IFPA-CD Project provides an important opportunity to develop the tourism potential of some of the PAs in the Albertine Rift.

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<sup>3</sup> 2013. Economic and Statistical Analysis of Tourism in Uganda. World Bank.

Many of the communities located next to PAs are densely populated, and the high population growth in recent years, combined with limited alternative livelihoods, has increased pressure on limited resources. A number of conflicts between PA officials and members of communities living next to protected areas have been reported. Relations between communities and PA authorities are generally good and collaborative, but despite the considerable benefits of the PAs to local communities, competition over natural resources risks the escalation of conflict into threats of, or actual, violence.

### Rationale and objectives of the study

The main objective of this study was to assess the pattern of conflicts between UWA and NFA staff and local communities and systems to manage such issues to support sustainable peaceful coexistence between PAAs and the park adjacent communities. **The findings are intended to inform project support to management activities in protected areas.**

The assessment sought to: a) establish the nature and extent of enforcement-related conflict between UWA/NFA and local communities; b) explore whether allegations or perceptions of misconduct by UWA and NFA are widespread in the project area or limited to specific locations; c) assess the existing infrastructure and capacities for handling conflicts (grievance management systems) with a view to exploring ways of reducing real or perceived conflicts and misconduct.

### Study area

The case studies were identified within Protected Areas in each of the three regions. Furthermore, the study areas for this assignment were selected to have a geographical coverage deemed to provide a mix of conditions valuable in the assessment of patterns of conflict between UWA and NFA staff and local communities. The study areas were therefore selected based on the presence of the PAs in the sub-regions, being part of IFPA-CD, biodiversity and tourism importance, potential for conflicts, and cultural or ethnic differences, as confirmed by the project Focal Persons representing UWA and NFA and selected DFOs. CFRs were selected to have a mix of both natural and plantation forest reserves. Further details on each study area and the rationale for selection have been included in Annex 1.

### Methodology

The assessment employed a multiple case study design in the Northern, Central, and Southern regions of the IFPA-CD project, in which altogether 18 protected areas (PAs) were purposefully selected (6 national parks, 9 central forest reserves (CFRs) and 3 WRs) (See Annex 1). These included mostly PAs included in the project, but also some PAs that were not part of the project but were in the same landscape (namely Barifa and Lodongo CFRs). The key individuals/communities targeted in this study included: local communities in the selected PAs, local council leaders in communities adjacent to the selected PAs, Community Wildlife Management Associations, or Resource Use Groups and their committees, MWE, UWA and NFA staff, District technical staff, e.g., environment officers, forest officers, community development officers and conservation NGOs in the selected PAs or local communities. Up to 54 FGDs, 112 KIIs, 28 community dialogue meetings and 23 individual IDIs were conducted in all the three regions (Table 1). After field data collection, each interview was transcribed in English in a textual format using Microsoft word and then analyzed using content analysis in line with the assessment objectives.

**Table 1. Study Sample**

<b>Data Collection Method</b>	<b>Number conducted in the landscape</b>			
	Central	Northern	Western	<b>Total</b>
<b>Focus Group Discussions</b>	24	16	14	<b>54</b>
<b>Key Informant Interviews</b>	40	30	42	<b>112</b>
<b>Community Dialogues</b>	12	04	12	<b>28</b>
<b>In-depth Interviews</b>	08	09	06	<b>23</b>

The study consists of three phases including: (i) review of existing literature and the preparation of an inception report; (ii) recruiting and training research assistants (RAs) that supported the consultants in data collection; and (iii) preparation of the report. Data were collected using a combination of methods including: (i) Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) with communities (e.g. as members of a resource user group); (ii) Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) with community leaders/ local councils, staff of NFA/UWA and conservation NGOs operating in the areas adjacent to the PAs, district technical staff; (iii) In-depth Interviews (IDIs) with community members who had experienced or had detailed knowledge of specific cases of misconduct; and (iv) community level dialogue meetings. The fieldwork was conducted between December 2022 and March 2023. The interviews focused on incidents that happened since 2020, during the project period.

## Section II: Key findings on sources of conflicts

This section summarizes information on conflict risk through a functional classification based on the source of conflict. Part A summarizes disputes directly over protected area resources. Part B summarizes and categorizes examples of (real and perceived) misconduct both by PA officials and members of PA-adjacent communities. Quotes from stakeholders consulted during the field visits have been included to illustrate how these challenges are perceived at the local level.

### Part A: Resource-related conflicts

#### 1. Land

Demarcation of PA boundaries and their maintenance is a key activity of the PAAs but has not been completed within all the study sites. Respondents in the study complained that PA boundaries appear to be fluid and tend to shift towards villages. In fact (and to the contrary), expansion of farming activities (growing crops or grazing animals) has occurred across the landscape, and results in some areas of encroachment on PA boundaries at all sites. However, land-related conflicts around the PA boundaries were reported at only eight of the 18 PAs sampled (Table 2). Of these, one site is in the Western region (Queen Elizabeth National Park (QENP)); three sites are in the Central (Toro-Semliki WR, Bugoma CFR, and Kagombe CFR) and one site is in the Northern region (Lodonga CFR).

**Table 2. Land-related Conflicts, already known or reported during fieldwork, in the PAs under the analysis**

PA	CONFLICT AREA	CONFLICT ISSUES	PROGRESS, as of March 2023
Ajai WR	Ayavu Parish	Expansion of the reserve land into community land. Expansion sought so as to re-introduce White Rhinos	Meetings have been held with the communities, but there are misunderstandings over who will compensate them
QENP	Busunga Kidodo – Kasese municipality Isango subcounty	Local community encroachment on the PA land	The following has been done: Busunga - the case is in court. Kidodo - the case is at the Police. Isango - the case is at Police.
Toro-Semliki WR	Kanara Village	Following a 2006 request by local people, the President directed 10 acres be allocated from the reserve to the people as burial ground. UWA allocated land within the PA to the people who now use it for burial. Local leaders want it degazetted and UWA is reluctant to do this.	No progress
Toro-Semliki WR	Boundary dispute	An NGO opened a case in 2016 with the High Court of Uganda at Fort	To date the case has not been adjudicated. A land

		Portal alleging that the park boundary extends into community land in two subcounties of Kabarole districts, affecting 14 communities; it is alleged that this land was illegally seized around 2005, at the time of withdrawal of insurgents and return of peace	survey undertaken by the Lands Commission in 2017 found that “most of ... claims are inside the gazetted boundary of the reserve”
Bugoma CFR	Sugar concession	Hoima Sugar was granted a concession on land, 5,579 ha of which is claimed by the NFA as part of Bugoma CFR. The ESIA issued for sugar growing was also challenged in court by a local NGO (in a case against NEMA and Hoima Sugar)	The High Court found in favor of Hoima Sugar in 2019 and in the second case in 2021.
Bugoma CFR	Kidoma parish	Unclear boundaries Farming activities in reserve land	There are dissatisfactions, but no legal action or confrontation from either side.
Kagombe CFR	Muhorro subcounty	Land ownership claims by both the PAAs and Local people Unclear boundaries	The court has instituted an injunction on the land, but people continue to use the land
Lodonga CFR		-Ownership of PA land -Family access to PA	One family claims ownership of land where PA sits and forcefully accesses forest resources without NFA permission.
Katonga WR	Cattle areas	Encroachment on the buffer zone	UWA has complained to the community members, but they continue to graze in the buffer beyond their boundaries

Local people in Muhorro sub-county have complained over unclear boundaries with Kagombe CFR claiming ownership over part of the land under the gazetted forest. They have sued the NFA over trespassing on their land, and there is currently an injunction ordered by the Court, pending settlement of the case. This is, however, generating conflicts in at least two ways: (i) The local people are not respecting the injunction. They continue to expand into the forest which brings them into contact and conflict with the law enforcement staff of the NFA. (ii) Their presence in the forest generates dissatisfaction among other communities who are not making gains from illegal access. As one local leader and a CFM member in a nearby Kagadi sub-county remarked in a CFM group discussion:

*“They [people of Muhorro] told us they have a court order, that they reported the NFA to the Government for chasing them out of the forest and said that their order to stay in the forest came from court. But here [Kagadi sub-county], we [the local leaders] are blamed by our community members for failure to collaborate with NFA, they say if we had [collaborated], they would also be cultivating in the forest”*

To which another community member added:

*“...and in Muhorro, we think those people gave bribes to the NFA officials for them to allow them cultivate... it has actually caused some people to leave this area and go to Muhorro to enjoy such benefits”.*

The neighboring communities who have restricted access to the reserve feel unfairly treated and continuously refer to their neighbors who have unfettered (although likely illegal) access. As one community member observed:

*“... there is a time NFA officials came to my garden and cut down my maize plantation in the year 2016, we forgave them because then they wanted to restore the forest. But the issue is that other communities cultivate [on forest land] and we don't, which hurts us so much”.*

Similarly, there has been a case in Lodonga CFR where local people claim ownership of reserve land:

*“There is a family here who claims that this whole land where the reserve was their land. They were asking NFA to leave their land and due to this some of these people are in prison, because they took the law in their hands by destroying the forest produce and clearing the trees for house construction”* KII with Forest Supervisor, Lodonga CFR

It appears that boundary contestations in the two cases above, but also other cases, are made by individuals seeking personal gains as: (i) people who have illegally settled on PA land; (ii) people/companies seeking control/ownership/degazettement of parts of PA land for themselves; and (iii) politicians seeking to use expansion of community activities inside the PAs as opportunity to obtain popular support .

## **2. Plant and wildlife resources**

Natural resources in the form of timber and NTFPs and animal products from PAs are vital extractive resources for PA-adjacent communities. There are also non-extractive uses that local people seek to use conservation areas for, including the spiritual and cultural uses such as performance of rituals and siting of beehives inside the PA boundaries.

Collection of timber resources from PAs is completely illegal and prohibited by Ugandan policies and laws, except under established concessions in CFRs (See Uganda Wildlife Act, 2019; and the NFTP, 2003). Hunting of animals is also prohibited in most PAs, with exception of those where regulated hunting is allowed based on the issued permits. For some selected NTFPs, access provisions have been made in CFM (NFA) and CRM (UWA) MOUs for people to collect these resources in agreed amounts and periods.

As a co-management and participatory approach, the objective of CRM and CFM is to encourage community sensitization, collaboration, and participation in the management of resources through regularized access and thereby ensure that the local communities meaningfully benefit from sustainable PA management.

CRM (originally called Multiple Use Programme) was first introduced in Bwindi and Mgahinga in the early 1990s through written agreements of the communities with UWA's predecessor, the Uganda National Parks, in programs to implement collaborative management of plant (flora) resources, beekeeping and honey collection. The Uganda Wildlife Act 2019 reconfirms the legal basis for CRM.

The approach of CFM, when institutionalized in 2003 under the NFTP, sought to (i) improve the forest conditions, (ii) regulate local people’s utilization of forest resources, and (iii) enable the conserved forests to make direct contributions to the incomes of the surrounding communities. One of the sample sites of this study (Budongo CFR) is among the first CFM pilot sites in Uganda. Upon successful implementation, it was, and continues to be, expected that CFM will contribute to the conservation of the sites and expand the supply of forest products, thereby improving people’s livelihoods and their relations with forest managers.

Access to PA resources was found to be the major source of conflict between the NFA/UWA and the communities, as the latter seek to collect the resources clandestinely where no agreements permitting access have ever been signed. However, the majority of the PAs have running CFM/CRM agreements with communities (Table 3). The agreements serve a critical role in regulating access to resources such as firewood, bamboo, fish, grass, and papyrus in the PAs. Participating communities also observed a working relationship with UWA/NFA authorities including a continuous dialogue that, for example, resulted in consideration of the request of the communities that Saturday is included in the agreements as one of the days for collection of firewood to cater for collections by children who are supposed to be in school on weekdays. Where the agreements have expired, access to the permitted resources is not rescinded by PA authorities, but communities tend to be unsure of the tenure security in such circumstances and may thus be reluctant to take on obligations such as reporting any illegal collections, yet this is a core reason for the establishment of these arrangements. Also, the renewal process is slow. A case in point is an agreement started in 2019, but yet to be completed in 2023.

**Table 3. Presence and status of CFMs/CRMs in the PAs under the analysis**

Landscape	Protected Area*	# of resource use agreements	# of groups with running agreements	Comments
CENTRAL	Kibale NP	29	20	-4 groups are negotiating renewal -1 group is re-organising before renewal. Most members left -1 group not interested in renewal. Was collecting wildlings, but has now established own tree nursery -3 groups have not taken any action following expiry of agreement
	Toro-Semliki NP	0	NA	-4 groups are each in the process of preparing an agreement -12 other groups have expressed interest -An old effort is a 2019 draft agreement on cultural tourism, but has never been completed

Landscape	Protected Area*	# of resource use agreements	# of groups with running agreements	Comments
	Toro-Semliki WR	4	3	- The one group with expired agreement is in the process of being renewed - Additional 8 groups are new and in the process of preparing agreements
	Budongo CFR	6	2	-4 MoUs have been signed by NFA, but yet to be returned to the communities
	Bugoma CFR	4	4	-1 new agreement awaiting signing by the NFA
	Kagombe CFR	0	NA	- 6 groups are in the process of being formed. - For 2 groups the process started in 2019 and for the other 4 the process started in 2020
NORTHERN	Murchison Falls NP	8	Not sure	There are about eight groups but the staff contacted could not verify the number of running or expired agreements
	Barifa CFR	1	None	An agreement is in place but not yet running
	Ajai CFR	10	5	Five MOUs are active but one expired
	Mt. Kei CFR	1	None	One MOU is in place but not active yet
	Lodonga CFR	1	None	One MOU is in place but not active
	Otzi West CFR	1	None	One MOU in place but not yet active
WESTERN	Bwindi Impenetrable NP	4	2	Two are active and two are still under review.
	Rwenzori Mountain NP	33	33	Five of the 33 MoUs will expire in 2024
	QE NP	17	9	8 MoUs are under review
	Katonga WR	15	5	10 MoUs are under review
	Kalinzu CFR	4	2	2 MoUs including one in Mitoma which has contestations between NFA and UWA are still under review
	Kasyoha-Kitomi CFR	9	8	8 MoUs have been approved for operation, they are left with one stage of signing

\*NP=National Park; WR=Wildlife Reserve; CFR=Central Forest Reserve

However, whereas communities in these areas generally appreciate the existence of these arrangements, some issues were singled out as needing attention to maximize utility from the arrangements and to minimize conflict between communities and UWA/NFA staff:

- (a) Some agreements have expired and have not yet been renewed. Communities blamed this on the PAAs being slow in processing requests for renewal.
- (b) Some NFA/UWA staff reportedly penalize lawful resource collectors (of non-timber forest products), enforcing restrictions as if no agreements exist.
- (c) Some members felt a need to add more to the list of permitted resources in the agreements, including suggestions of timber, although most members appreciated the need to keep additional resources off the list.

On the other hand, UWA/NFA key informants observed that communities frequently:

- (a) engage in other non-permitted activities or collect resources in excess of the amounts permitted.
- (b) enter the conservation areas on non-permitted days and times.
- (c) Some CFM/CRM committees were non-functional and alleged to be corrupt and engaged in illegal activities.

Generally, CFM and CRM groups have roles beyond facilitating community park/forest interactions. They are strong units for collective action and are increasingly engaged by development actors such as NGOs that come into the areas as external actors with development interventions and desire to work with local groups. The CFM/CRM groups have social networks of trust and support which the external interventions seek to tap into instead of investing in forming new groups. Many of these groups have constituted themselves to also function as Village Savings and Loan Associations.

#### Reports of challenges related to PA access:

Besides the roles that CFM and CRM play in their respective areas, there are conflicts surrounding illegal collections by communities with no such agreements. This occurs around all PAs. For example, one respondent around Barifa CFR said:

*"I see there are people in our society, and they sneak into the forest to cut its trees, more so when there is moonlight. They go to illegally cut the trees in the forest. According to their [NFA] policy, we are not supposed to steal these trees, and we are to use formal procedures"*

FGD with Men from Zambia Cell, Mvara Ward, Arua District (near Barifa CFR).

There are people who access the forests under the pretext of fetching firewood but get deep into the forests and cut down trees for timber for commercial purposes such as poles for house construction. It is in such instances that the law enforcement staff get into conflict with the adjacent communities.

Access to pasture and water are the other resources that trigger conflict between enforcement staff and the community members. Whereas it is illegal to graze animals in the protected areas, it was found out that around the protected areas of Katonga WR, QENP, Toro-Semliki WR some community members illegally graze their domestic animals – cows, goats, and sheep - in the PAs. One community member said:

*“During the dry season, water is only found in the national park, and the pasture is in plenty compared to the areas outside the park. It is therefore near impossible for any cattle keeper around this community to say that they cannot trespass in the park with their cows.”*

Non-extractive uses were more popular among some communities than others. For example, the Bamaga have cultural sites inside Semuliki NP and wish to access them regularly, while people in Kanara have their burial ground inside Toro Semliki WR.

Generally, because of the vital nature of the PA and CFR resources to the livelihoods of the local communities, local people frequently collect prohibited resources. Even where UWA and NFA have arrangements to allow the neighboring communities to access the protected areas on agreed terms e.g. to collect firewood and herbs on specified days and hours, the community members sometimes go against this arrangement and access the protected areas without permission from management, thus triggering clashes and conflict with the enforcement staff.

### **3. Park-Community Tensions Over Wildlife Incursion and Damage to Communities**

Communities neighboring protected areas live in fear for their lives as well as the security of their property, owing to the incursion of wild animals. Whereas there have been initiatives to contain wild animals in the national park like fencing the park boundaries with electric fences or other HWC infrastructures on some parts of QENP and in other PAs, this initiative has neither covered the whole park boundaries nor been introduced in all PAs. Consequently, communities around wildlife PAs are susceptible to attacks by wild animals. Reports of crop and livestock damage were widespread across all the study sites, while attacks on people were less frequent, though sometimes with far-reaching consequences as evidenced by the recent (March 2023) fatal attack of a chimpanzee on a baby in Karuswiga central cell, Muhorro town council, Kagadi district.

#### Allegations of wildlife incursion and damage:

In QENP, for example, community members around Kasenyi and Kahendero areas reported the multiple losses of human life to the wildlife, especially hippos and crocodiles.

*“... We have lost a number of people here and houses without compensation. Our relatives have been killed by hippos and crocodiles. Some houses have been destroyed. We have reported to UWA, but they do not respond to our concerns...”*  
*Participant of the FGD at Kasenyi.*

Hippos have continued to ravage people’s houses and community boreholes in Katunguru, among other properties. This insecurity is a source of tension and poor relations between PA enforcement staff and adjacent communities. However, there are instances of swift responses from the authorities, and this helps ease tension with the communities. For example, as one respondent adjacent to the Kibale NP observed:

*Animals raiding our crops are a constant threat and have made our lives difficult... however, it helps that UWA [rangers] respond when we make noise, including them coming out in the night to scare-shoot in the air and scare the elephants away from our*

*gardens and back into the park. This helps reduce our losses and we appreciate the park people for that.*

Similarly, in related incidents in Kagadi, UWA has responded with several efforts to address the issues, including promises of hiring chimpanzee monitors within the community and compensating the parents of the dead child mentioned above.

Indeed, there was a general demand by local communities to be compensated whenever wild animals attack humans, destroy their crops, or attack their domestic animals. For this, the Uganda Wildlife Act, 2019 provides for compensation in case of wildlife damage. To limit these attacks, UWA has also put in place interventions to manage wildlife incursions including electric fences, trenches, elephant board walks, and beehive fences to minimize wildlife raids. The communities have been engaged by most PAAs through recruiting wildlife scouts and chimp guardians. The 2019 Wildlife Act provides for these scouts as part of the structure, although they are yet to be implemented, as well as compensation for the loss of property and lives. Positive developments that were observed that could be key in minimizing and resolving conflicts include:

- a) Compensation of survivors or victims of wildlife incursions, which is starting in some PAs as provided for in the 2019 Wildlife Act. However, communities expressed that the process is cumbersome.
- b) PA enforcers especially UWA (through the community conservation unit) have tried to sensitize and inform the park-adjacent communities through community meetings on the benefits of wildlife, and why wildlife should be protected. However, the frequency of these meetings is still low.
- c) Resource use agreements have been signed between PAs and CRMs/CFMs groups which guarantee regulated access. However, as mentioned above, many of these structures are not fully functional and need to be strengthened.
- d) Relations between PAs and communities - PA staff relate with communities through attending social gatherings such as weddings, funerals, etc. These provide avenues of mutual support and interactions that are key in minimizing conflicts and promoting peaceful co-existence.

## **Part B Alleged misconduct by UWA and NFA staff and adjacent communities**

### **UWA/NFA Staff**

Alleged misconduct by UWA and NFA staff falls into four functional categories: (i) improper confiscation or destruction of property; (ii) abusive behavior (physical or verbal) during enforcement action (arrest or detention); (iii) improper conduct not associated with enforcement action, including improper use of firearms, drunken behavior, verbal abuse, and inappropriate sexual relations; and (iv) corrupt behavior, including soliciting / accepting bribes and nepotism. The extent of the spread of these allegations varied across PAs and landscapes (Table 4).

While only a handful of incidents of alleged misconduct were reported from any single protected area, there appear to be differences in their occurrence across protected areas (see table 4). Confiscation of property and corruption were both reported at roughly two thirds of PAs included in the study, whereas abusive behavior and other forms of misconduct were each reported at only around one third of PAs. The variation in allegations of misconduct across PAs was reported by local people and key informants to be a result of a combination of factors including: (i) military presence in the case of CFRs where key

informants attributed most misconduct (especially concerning abusive behavior during enforcement and improper conduct not associated with enforcement) to the military attached to support PA staff; (ii) local dependence on PA resources which both the local people and key informants observed to result from availability of resources critical to the local livelihoods or limited access to alternatives; (iii) absence/unclear arrangements for local people to access the resources; and (iv) as observed by some key informants, extent of inclination of local PA management to a protectionist approach. Table 4 further shows that there were also differences in misconduct across the three regions, with more cases of abusive behaviour during enforcement reported in the Northern region, besides improper confiscation or destruction of property, improper conduct not associated with enforcement, and corruption. From the perspectives of the local people and key informants, it is suggested that the regional differences are due to again military presence, particularly those deployed to enhance forest rangers' capacity during operations, unclear or less established arrangements for access to resources (e.g., most CFRs in the northern region do not have active MOUs for CFM), thin staff to patrol the PAs and limited knowledge of the SOs and SOPs.

Out of necessity, local people illegally access PAs in search of essential resources for domestic use despite their awareness of some restrictions, the risk of arrest, and attendant fines. Confiscation of property, especially tools used to collect forest resources illegally, was by far the most frequently reported form of misconduct (although this is within the PAA mandate). Destruction of property, where it occurred, was the result of an improperly conducted process of tracing illegally collected resources, but also a failure of the suspects to cooperate.

Standard Forestry Practices (SFPs), 2021, in instruction 173(v) under chapter 3.7.4 provide for the inclusion of military and other security agencies to give cover to NFA enforcement staff whenever there is a need. However, it was reported that some of the military officers deployed to support enforcement teams have been involved in some forms of misconduct during operations.

Whereas section/chapter 3.10.2.3 of the SFPs on Obligations of NFA to LGs and Communities, in agreement with the NFTP, provide a detailed list of the obligations, there is little known to the communities about the detailed provisions of the SFPs, SOPs and the Act itself. This provides a basis for contradictions and conflict between the enforcement staff and the communities, especially when it comes to property confiscation and arrests. In the following, some relevant aspects of NFA's Standing Orders (SO) and UWA's Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) have been summarized.

The NFA uses the Uganda Forestry Standing Orders (SO) and Administrative Policies (UFSOAPs), 1997, designed to address the forestry department context at the time. Currently, the NFA uses the NFTP (2003) and National Forestry and Tree Planting Regulations (NFTPR) (2016) and the Human Resource Manual (2020) for law enforcement and staff management and the draft SFPs for Uganda (2021). The NFTPR (2016) section 49(2) authorizes NFA staff to remove from a reserve a person who has entered or is committing unlawful acts in the reserve that are contrary to the provisions of the NFTP or the NFTPR. The NFTP section 88(1) provides that an "authorised person may arrest, without a warrant, any person whom he or she reasonably suspects has committed or is in the process of committing an offense according to this Act". Thus, despite the community allegations and negative perception of the NFA staff restrictions, the staff act within the law when, for example, they arrest people being involved in illegal activities. This includes CFM members engaging in activities outside those prescribed in the CFM agreements.

**Table 4: Alleged Cases of misconduct by PAA staff between 2020-2022 reported during fieldwork around each PA**

Form of Misconduct <sup>4</sup>	CENTRAL						Northern						Western					
	KNP	TSNP	TSWR	Budongo CFR	Bugoma CFR	Kagombe CFR	Barifa CFR <sup>5</sup>	Ajai CFR	Mt. Kei CFR	Lodonga CFR <sup>6</sup>	Otzi West	Murchison Falls NP	Bwindi	RMNP	Katonga	QENP	Kalinzu CFR	Kasyoha-Kitomi
Improper confiscation or destruction of property	0	0	0	4	2	1	2	1	4	2	2	4	0	0	2	1	0	4
Abusive behavior during enforcement	0	0	0	3	1	0	4	2	1	0	2	3	0	0	3	3	0	1
Improper conduct not associated with enforcement	0	0	0	0	0	1	2	0	1	0	1	5	0	0	0	2	2	0
Corrupt behavior	0	1	1	2	0	2	3	0	2	2	3	3	0	0	3	1	0	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>7</b>

<sup>4</sup> Abusive behavior is either physical or verbal and reportedly occurs during enforcement action (arrest or detention); Improper conduct not associated with enforcement action includes improper use of firearms, drunken behavior, verbal abuse, and inappropriate sexual relations; Corrupt behavior includes acts of soliciting / accepting bribes and nepotism. Note that the one reported case of alleged use of deadly force in Bwindi is not included in this table.

<sup>5</sup> This CFR is not part of the IFPA-CD Project.

<sup>6</sup> This CFR is not part of the IFPA-CD Project.

**UWA's SOPs** and law enforcement procedures are known only to a few staff, and many of the local communities are unaware of them. This was revealed during KIIs with UWA staff. Most of the key informants interviewed from all the regions were not very sure of the SOPs and did not even have copies of them. Only a few staff from PAs such as Semuliki NP, Toro-Semuliki WR, Ajai WR, and Murchison Falls NP outlined some SOPs. The SOPs they singled out included staff going for patrol after informing their bosses and following the Chain of Command; and staff not using excessive force when arresting suspects, among others. Local communities also engage in various forms of misconduct, such as stealing and destruction of PAA property, beating of PAA staff, and corruption, all of which lead to conflicts. Misconduct by staff is not caused by a lack of provisions in the SOPs, but limited knowledge of the SOPs by UWA staff. For example, about arresting suspects, the SOPs make some relevant provisions, which were not observed by the staff. These include the requirement to conduct search in the presence of local leaders or police, and the arresting officer respecting the rights of the suspect and ensuring his/her safety. The Code of Conduct contained in the Human Resource Manual calls for diligence, integrity, discipline, professionalism at work, and ethical behavior and legitimate work practices. Finally, as a key gap, the SOPs only stipulate procedures for handling HWC, such as rushing a victim to the nearest health facility in case of an injury, reporting to the Police in case of death, and arranging a compassionate contribution to the victim or affected family. The SOPs do not explicitly state how to respond to reports or direct observations of improper conduct by staff, especially harsh arrests, beatings, bribery, extortion and kickbacks.

### 1) Improper confiscation or destruction of property

Confiscation of property was by far the most reported form of perceived misconduct by law enforcement officers of both UWA and NFA. There were also some cases of property destruction, but such cases were less frequent.

Confiscation of property occurred in areas with no agreements for local people to collect forest resources from the PAs where all such collections were thus illegal, and also where such arrangements did exist but local people entered the PAs with disallowed tools. For example, in a community dialogue meeting in Rubirizi in the Southern region, a member observed:

*"It [confiscation] is there in some areas such as Nyamishekye and Butoha where the local community people cut down trees and let them dry in the forest. When they go there to pick up the dry trees, their tools such as pangas and axes are confiscated by the authorities. This has contributed to the conflict or disagreement between the staff of NFA and the local people. The conflict is that the [resource use] agreement they signed is not being respected."*

The cases are generally not reported to the police. The property reported by communities was mainly hand tools especially the hand axe and panga.

Communities also reported widespread confiscation of forest resources, especially timber and charcoal. Some of the confiscations occur in the forests, near the boundaries, but also further away including at home and marketplaces, and is usually a source of grievances and misunderstandings as elaborated in one FGD in the central region where a participant observed:

*"Hmm it happened because they [NFA] got a misunderstanding with my [local council] councilor because for them [NFA] they allow people to go and carryout charcoal burning, but instead of arresting the charcoal from here [in the village] they wait when the women*

*have taken the charcoal to the market then arrest them yet they have already got money from them this side and they go and arrest the charcoal in the market. Now this councillor told them that "now, you the charcoal passes by you, it is your job to go to the forest to carryout patrols, so why do you wait for the charcoal to go past you then reach the public and you decide to confiscate it from there?"*

The complaint exhibited in the above quote is that enforcement staff execute the confiscations in the wrong place. For example, charcoal found in the market, even though this is always done only when there is reason for suspicion or clear evidence. When the enforcement staff conduct confiscations or arrests on such a basis, the community perceives it as illegal, thus triggering conflict between them and the enforcement staff. While confirming these confiscations, KIs from the communities and PA authorities observed that these largely occur where communities have breached the law, such as accessing resources at the wrong times of the day in the wrong/disallowed zones, and on the wrong days. Even where some resource collections are permitted under collaborative agreements, users are barred from entering the forests with tools such as axes or pangas. As the staff explained, this is to safeguard against the cutting of live trees by community members who cannot restrict themselves to the collection of dead wood as permitted in the agreement. However, community members also feel that the resource agreements they signed are not being respected, and that because of this some of the so-called illegal activities are not that illegal. The illegal cutting of trees in reserves, a precursor to such confiscations, was also acknowledged by the communities, although each tended to maintain it occurs in communities other than their own as in the above case in Rubirizi.

However, most of these tools are usually returned to the owners through local arrangements as elaborated by a KI in the Central region who, as a CFM committee and LC member, observed:

*"As a leader, I sometimes intervene and talk to the NFA people if a local person notifies me of such confiscation and I should say many times the tools are returned... of course, the person is warned and it may be a lengthy process, but yes many times we get our tools back"*

Communities are aware that these acts are outlawed, but that the associated confiscations are presented as a big point of conflict indicates the difficulties that the PA staff have in enforcing laws. The situation is not helped when local leaders take sides with the communities instead of being impartial.

Confiscation of products, especially timber and charcoal illegally resourced from the forests is also a source of conflict between the authorities and communities, especially CFM committees. Many of these resources are never returned and communities perceive this avenue to be used by the law enforcement teams to enrich themselves at the expense of the communities and in disregard of commitments made under CFM arrangements. This concern was reported by several CFM groups.

In Mt. Kei CFR, a man's house and crops were destroyed by NFA staff, after he encroached on land belonging to the reserve. This was confirmed by female FGD participants from Migyale Village.

*"This is government land, they warned him not to tamper with this land as it belongs to the government. He said that this land belonged to his father ... They ordered him to leave but he refused. They came in and broke into his house and they destroyed the plants he had planted, that is cassava and bananas"*

FGD with Women from Migyale Village, Migyale Parish near Mt. Kei CFR

Section 3.10.2.3. of the SFPs on Obligations of NFA to LGs and Communities highlights the legal provisions in the Forestry Act. However, there is no apparent provision guiding the actions of the enforcement officer as to what they should do in a case where a community member settles within the forest reserve. This is a particular case that exposes the gaps in the legal provisions, which should be taken into consideration during the revision of the laws and policies. Although the incidence of destruction of property was acknowledged as infrequent, it also exposes the existing lack of cooperation and absence of peaceful coexistence between the community and enforcement staff, owing to the perceptions and behaviour of certain community members.

## **2) Abusive behavior (physical or verbal) during enforcement action (arrest or detention)**

Cases of beatings, ill-treatment, or the intentional infliction of severe pain or suffering, whether physical or mental, were also reported. Communities complained that rangers beat them over what staff consider illegal such as fishing, collecting firewood, and being in the PAs at the wrong times. Allegations of abusive arrests by both UWA and NFA enforcement staff were also made at several sites.

For example, it was reported in the Southern region that in one of the villages around Kasyoha-Kitomi, a community member was dealing in firewood as his business. As such, he would cut down trees from his garden, split and dry the wood, and then take it to the market for sale. It so happened that at one time he had prepared heaps of firewood around his home, and the rangers came to him, arrested him, and accused him of getting trees for firewood from the forest reserve, which he denied. He was allegedly taken and beaten until he lost his senses, and the piles of firewood, which, according to his wife, he had not got from the forest were loaded on a truck brought by NFA staff and taken away. In Katonga WR, a community member was also allegedly beaten badly by UWA rangers, and his limbs were broken because he was caught poaching.

Looking at NFA, in the Central region, a district key informant alleged a disabled woman councilor was allegedly harshly arrested by its officials on suspicion of carrying timber from Budongo CFR:

*“Yes, especially when they are arresting people, a person suspected of carrying out illegal activities. It came up in a meeting with UWA, there was a lady moving from Buliisa district on a pickup but in the pick-up, there were pieces of mahogany, apparently illegally loaded on the pickup. NFA officials, working with a soldier intercepted the vehicle. This lady is a district councilor, and she is lame and walks with a stick. In the process of arresting her even the stick was grabbed from her; she could not move, she fell down, and she felt embarrassed. Even the way others are handled is the same! So during the process of arresting, some people are mishandled, even beaten.”*

Similar accusations were made about NFA staff in Barifa CFR in the Northern region, where park-adjacent communities complained about unlawful arrests and use of excessive force during arrests, especially of women who go to the reserve to collect resources such as firewood and grass for making brooms, and that this has deprived them of their livelihoods. There is a provision for enforcement officers to “use reasonable force to restrain and arrest uncooperative suspects” (UWA SOPs section 1.13 (3)), but there is no clear definition of what constitutes reasonable force. In future revisions of SOPs and other policy guidelines, such ambiguities should be removed by making clear guidelines on what constitutes reasonable force. However, section 1.13(8) cautions and provides that “the arresting officer shall respect the rights of the suspect and ensure his/her safety”. Besides, arrests are intelligence-led, this should be made known to both the arresting officers and the potential suspects in the communities.

In the Southern region, in Nyakiyumbu Sub-County in Kasese at the outskirts of QE NP, it was alleged that park rangers one time invaded the village at night, surrounded three homesteads, and arrested male occupants suspected to be poachers. The community members considered this unlawful, as no arrest warrants were presented to the suspects who were allegedly severely beaten. Similar occurrences were mentioned in communities around Katonga WR, where it was alleged that some people were followed into their homes at night, on suspicion of engaging in poaching.

On their part, NFA and UWA confirmed arrests were carried out following the law and to investigate and bring to book the community members who engage in or are suspected of engaging in illegal activities in the PAs. Some key informants corroborated this as below:

*“Now, this one of saying that people are being arrested from their villages. If one person was arrested from the park and others escaped and he says that, why are you getting me alone? I was with so and so. When you ask them where he is and they say he is in this place, you go to the LC of that place, and police leads that operation. And it's not a common thing. So, if you find someone in the village alleging that he was wrongfully arrested, that is the cause. The police will pick you if you are suspected and they will interrogate you. If they find you are innocent, they will release you, if they find you have questions to answer, they will detain you”*

KII with the Acting Warden, Murchison Falls NP

Further, night arrests were explained by staff as due to the difficulty in locating the culprits during daytime, while the use of what may be seen as excessive force is occasioned by people resisting otherwise lawful arrests when the communities sometimes turn violent.

### **3) Improper conduct not associated with enforcement action**

There were several cases of reported alleged misconduct not directly related to enforcement activities which included shooting and one case of an alleged killing,<sup>7</sup> improper use of firearms, drunken behaviour, verbal abuse, and inappropriate sexual behavior.

Key informants and community members suggested that rangers may sometimes use firearms inappropriately, particularly shooting in the air when under the influence of alcohol. This is reportedly managed through disciplinary procedures.

*“There is a problem of drunkenness among some rangers. When drunk, they shoot anyhow, though usually in the air..., but may even threaten people that they will kill them if they see them in the national park”*

KII with a representative of Green Uganda, a community-based organization

*“Sometimes yes, at the drinking point ...especially rangers when ... on their way back from work there are those that end up going to drink, and then others start shooting because of the influence of alcohol. In case they are brought here we take them to the disciplinary committee”*

KII with Law Enforcement Officer, Murchison Falls NP

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<sup>7</sup> This incident was reported to the Bank and underwent the E-SIRT Process.

A few cases of inappropriate sexual conduct were alleged in the Northern region, especially against women which is contrary to the human resource manual provisions on how UWA staff should relate with the communities. In one FGD near MFNP, communities accused UWA staff of ‘stealing people’s wives’. An LC III in Pakwach District also said, “Sometimes they [UWA staff] come to our area and impregnate our daughters”. Other key informants from the same park added:

*“This depends on the behavior of an individual when he acts unprofessionally with the community members out there, of which we have not heard serious cases. May be a staff going out there and luring a girl into a relationship and may be the community finds it out, which can bring about conflicts between the staff and the people concerned. This one happens in very many places, we can’t say it doesn’t happen.”*

KII with a Community Conservation Ranger, MFNP

#### **4) Corrupt behavior, including soliciting / accepting/perceptions of bribery and nepotism**

Different forms of personal corruption by PA staff were reported in all the regions. The most common forms included alleged extortion, bribery, kickbacks, and to a small extent, nepotism.

There were claims of alleged extortion in almost all the sampled PAs. From the central region, for example, a CFM group member claimed:

*“Those ones [enforcement officers] want money. Anything where there is a possibility of making some money, they want it ... because we asked them if you have arrested someone, and you get money from him which office does that money go to? The government? Where is the receipt for [that] money? ... which means the forest is now theirs not for the government. They get money for themselves from the people arrested. For them, it is my stomach and my family.”*

Communities further asserted that enforcement officers obtain money from them through force or threats when they are found engaging in illegal activities, or to return their confiscated items or release detained suspects. Community perception of PAA corruption is illustrated by the following:

*“You know these people of NFA see us the community members as people who do not have money and when they find you have only a basin or a sack of charcoal, they confiscate it. They even say you pay a fine of UGX5,000, and yet you were taking the charcoal for cooking at home, but those other people bribe them with money. Just in the same way, my brother has said, these people give them millions of money and you here who has charcoal for cooking they come with police and soldiers and you are only cutting small trees to make for yourself charcoal for cooking and they confiscate your tools like panga and axes or they arrest you and detain you at the Police. Once they find out that either your license has expired or you are lacking one, they ask who the owner of the charcoal is and arrest you and take you to the Sub-County and they ask you to pay a fine.”*

FGD with Men from Ori Village, Pamoyi Parish, Moyo District (near Otzi West CFR)

However, staff dismissed the allegations of extortion, saying that it is used to tarnish their names. For example, a KI in the central region remarked:

*“For extortion, we just hear people saying extortion, extortion especially politicians they say there is extortion here and there, but it lacks evidence; they say extortion and yet it has not even happened. You know with our work; you know how it is difficult when one wants to tarnish you, they tarnish you using such words. I have heard that in my area here but in other areas I have also been hearing it.”*

KII with the Forest Supervisor, Kagombe CFR

As reported by key informants, local people may be complicit in or even initiators of corrupt behavior. Extortion cases are usually not reported, as it is within the interest of the victims to pay even though they tend to feel aggrieved afterwards. So, local communities themselves tolerate extortion from UWA and NFA to avoid being arrested or detained for engaging in illegalities.

However, over the years the management of the PAs has decisively handled some cases of corruption. For example, within the central region, there was a case in Toro-Semliki WR in 2019 where a staff extorted some money from pastoralists and allowed illegal grazing in the reserve; but when this was discovered, the staff was expelled from UWA.

Encouragingly, there were no major cases of misconduct reported in some PAs, such as Semuliki NP, Kibale NP, and Toro-Semliki WR in the Central region, where the major cause of conflicts is due to wildlife incursions on farm/ community land. This was established by FGD participants and some key informants:

*“...Misconduct?...we have not had them. We have not had any case of staff misbehaving. I have not heard any case [of misconduct by community members], for the time I have been here ..... they [abuses] are not common, I have not heard anything surely. The relationship [with the community] is okay, apart from the element of human wildlife conflict that I told you as a result of crop raids, that is what is bringing issues. The communities feel they want to be paid every now and then.”*

Assistant Warden, Community Conservation, Semuliki NP

Community members around Katonga WR in the Southern region alleged that sometimes the rangers find domestic animals such as cows or goats, either tied or grazing near the reserve on community land. When they want to get money or for some reason have a grudge against the owner of the animals, they push the animals into the reserve or sometimes tether the animals in the reserve to make a case of trespassing against the owner. They take photos of the animals within the park, impound them, and charge the owner. As a result, the owner would have no choice but to pay a fine for his animals trespassing in the reserve. Claims of such acts were made at only this one UWA site, and according to UWA staff and community key informants, this is only an allegation.

### **Alleged misconduct by members of adjacent communities**

The SCA found that local communities themselves may also engage in various forms of misconduct towards UWA and NFA staff. The most common form of misconduct involved personal corruption, followed by stealing and destruction of property. Cases of verbal abuse, beatings as well as alleged killings or threats to kill were also reported.

### **Stealing and destruction of property**

Confiscation and destruction of property was the most reported form of misconduct that also involved local communities. Cases of local communities stealing property belonging to protected area staff were reported. For example, the LC III of Kei Sub County in the Northern region said that at one time a staff of Mt. Kei CFR who was riding a motorcycle was followed by some local community members up to Yumbe district, where they removed the motorcycle from him, and it was eventually reported as having been stolen. Unfortunately, this CFR staff ended up losing his job due to this act of the local people.

Destruction of NFA property by park-adjacent communities was reported in many of the sampled CFRs in the Central part of the landscape. Usually, these cases were said to be triggered by encroachers or illegal loggers who wanted to fight back, resist arrest, or simply retaliate against NFA. For example, three military camps of the UPDF officers attached to Kagombe CFR were burnt by local people after discovering that the soldiers had gone for an operation against their illegal activities. The same communities have also started intentional fires. This was confirmed by the Forest Supervisor.

*"... we have a few cases where the encroachers would want to fight the staff. That one happens when resisting arrests... for example, there is a time when we moved all the soldiers from their camp so as to respond to an emergency, but then some community people burnt their detach where they used to sleep.....Yes the detach was still there when the communities heard that the soldiers had gone... they had gone for an operation and may be they thought they had left the place... but they knew we were bringing another group after sometime... they burnt the camp to may be stop us [this was] Kibaale side ... I have different detaches not one, they are around six, but they burnt around three. There is also burning of some forest areas, and they do start fires deliberately."*

KII with Forest Supervisor, Kagombe CFR

Another example of the destruction of property by local communities was the burning of a motorcycle belonging to NFA at Budongo CFR, when the motorcycle was left at the forest boundary as the officers patrolled the forest.

Where local communities destroy NFA property, they are not easily held accountable because of the difficulty in identifying the actual culprits. This is increasingly becoming a problem, as community members are less willing to divulge information about fellow residents, be it engagement in illegal activities or retaliation, reportedly because of reduced benefits from doing so, but also the insecurity of whistle-blowers, as confirmed by one NFA KI in the central region. This KI observed that:

*"... actually, sometimes people don't want the truth. You may find, one of the community members can come to us and give genuine information, but he gets harassed by the communities. Some people have changed location because of giving information to us."*

However, there is another dimension to the insecurity of whistle-blowers, where it is suggested that authorities who have connived with illegal resource collectors discourage and victimize community members who try to bring out information. This was reported in an FGD with male CFM members near Budongo CFR.

## **Corruption**

Different forms of corruption were reported in all the regions visited, and some involved or were maintained by the local communities. The most common forms implicating local communities were

bribery and kickbacks by local communities who sought to be allowed to engage in illegal activities in the PAs. Community members bribe the staff with their harvest, so that the latter allows them to cultivate in the reserve.

Another example of local communities allegedly bribing UWA staff is that of cattle grazers in Toro-Semliki WR in the Central region and Katonga WR in the Southern region. Community dialogues and FGDs revealed that the cattle grazers allegedly bribe UWA rangers to allow them to graze in the reserves.

### Verbal abuse

A few cases of alleged verbal abuse or use of words to insult, ridicule, manipulate, and/or degrade PA staff were reported especially in the Northern region:

*“Yeah, sometimes the community do misbehave towards these staff of NFA, when they [NFA] have wronged us, we don’t forget and whenever we see them passing, we insult them. Yes, it is true we sometimes insult the NFA staff when they have not done anything wrong to us.”*

FGD with Women from Metu Trading Centre, Moyo District (near Otzi West CFR)

However, these abuses are frequently ignored by the PA staff:

*“Sometimes, they can even abuse us, but now me who is in the field of conservation I just laugh and may be get somebody to talk to them.”*

KII with a Community Conservation Ranger, Murchison Falls NP

### Beatings

In isolated incidents, park-adjacent communities allegedly confront and beat PA staff. For example, a case of physical violence against a ranger was reported in Toro-Semliki WR in the Central region. Below is what one key informant said:

*“...we have had a case, one of our staff who actually was confronted and beaten in one of the trading centers. That center of Rwebisengo....as I told you earlier, that side they have always had that perception that we disturb them, and they do not want to see rangers around their area. Now, I think our staff just went and the moment they saw him they started fighting him. He was not badly injured, but he got some beatings.”*

KII with the Operations Commander, Toro-Semliki WR

### Killings and threats to kill

Cases of killings and injuring of both NFA and UWA staff on duty by local communities were reported in all the three regions visited. These mostly happened in the course of enforcing regulations and trying to carry out arrests. Below are examples from CFRs, a WR, and a NP in the Northern, Central, and Southern regions.

Attempted (alleged and reported) killing and injuring of NFA and UWA staff by community members or illegal loggers during arrests or operations were reported in the Northern region, in areas around MFNP,

Budongo CFR, and Mt. Kei CFR, mainly through local people resisting arrest by trying to knock them with their vehicles or using tools like arrows to defend themselves. District and local government key informants as well as UWA/NFA staff testified to this. One DFO in the Central region, referring to cases around Budongo CFR, thus remarked:

*"...During the confrontations on arrest; sometimes they fight 'you are not taking my timber, you are not taking my charcoal' they fight. The staff can get injured, sometimes they are forced to withdraw ... if you are one and intercept a group of men carrying timber, sometimes carrying the timbers on a motorcycle, and you know how wide timber is on a motorcycle, the man comes and knocks you with the timber. As you attempt to stop him, he does not reduce speed, he knocks you, and you fall down... Those who are fearing to be arrested fight back and staff get hurt."*

KII with a DFO, Central Region

*"...sometimes some of the communities do misbehave towards staff of NFA, there was one time they wanted to kill one of them using an arrow, but fortunately he escaped narrowly, and he was saved by other community members."*

KII with LC III Chairperson, Kei Sub County, Northern Region

From the Northern region, a key informant from Lodonga CFR confirmed a threat to his life. He said:

*"I think some time back they wanted to revenge on me for arresting the other man I told you about when they threatened to attack me with pangas and spears. They wanted to put fear in me, so that the NFA leaves their land and goes away."*

KII with Forest Supervisor, Lodonga CFR, Yumbe District

In Kasyoha-Kitomi CFR in the Southern region, a KI reported that at one time the rangers arrested loggers from the forest. When they went to follow up on other suspects in another part of the forest, they left six of the arrested suspects under the watch of one security officer, a soldier. The suspects managed to untie themselves, turned against the soldier, killed him, and ran away. Further, it was reported that in QE NP, the poachers are in the habit of laying traps of sharp pointed tree poles within the park when they go poaching. Once they are identified by the rangers, they run deep into the park, passing tactfully around the traps they have set. The rangers unknowingly fall into the traps as they chase the poachers, and they are injured or killed by the sharp sticks. In recent years, QENP has lost three rangers to that trick.

In summary, the most widespread form of misconduct among local communities is petty corruption. Stealing and destruction of agency property is also common and usually targets staff deemed uncooperative. Killing and attempts to kill were alleged in all three regions. Other forms of misconduct such as destruction of property, verbal abuse, and beating were mainly reported in the northern and central regions.

### Section III: Key findings on Conflict management

There are existing avenues for both the NFA and UWA to interact with the park adjacent affected communities and raise awareness on potential conflict issues to preserve a peaceful co-existence between the communities and PAAs.

#### Existing strategies

For UWA, awareness-raising on conflict issues is reported to be done by the community conservation unit but sometimes supported by the law enforcement unit when needed. The community conservation unit is charged with building positive relations between UWA and the communities. Across the sites visited, it was reported that staff of the unit reach out to the communities, disseminate information on what needs to be done by the communities and update them on opportunities available for community members. In turn, community members are free to share any concerns they have with UWA which provides an opportunity to identify possible risk areas with the potential to cause grievances. The unit thus regularly interfaces with the communities to raise awareness to ensure compliance with the relevant legal provisions.

Similarly, the NFA through its offices of the Forest Supervisor and Sector / Range Manager undertakes awareness raising. As remarked by an NFA forest supervisor in the central region, awareness raising, or sensitization of the community members is the primary tool of the authorities to ensure compliance and prevent conflict:

*“There are three main avenues for ensuring compliance: awareness raising, law enforcement, and prosecution. Of all these raising awareness is by far the most effective. Through it, one reaches many people as opposed to enforcement and prosecution which address individuals. In any case, raising awareness or sensitization is the natural first step of enforcement... because you should not enforce the law people don’t know ...so when you are enforcing the law that people already know the compliancy will be high, but when you are enforcing a law people don’t know you will only arrest people whom will only get to know that they have broken the law when you have arrested them... but when you are arresting somebody whom you have already given the information they will also know they are in the wrong.”*

In areas with CFM or CRM arrangements, awareness-raising is usually done together with the respective committees. Awareness campaigns are also conducted using other avenues such as radio shows. UWA and NFA KII participants observed that it is ideal that such meetings are held regularly, but this is impractical because of resource requirements to facilitate the meetings. To circumvent this, other additional opportunities are used including community meetings otherwise convened by local leaderships, prayer and functions at places of worship, weddings and parties, and sometimes funerals and cultural events. Places of worship were particularly reported as strong platforms for conflict management. Leaders and staff use these arrangements to share early warning messages to the community. This applies to both NFA and UWA.

A UWA game ranger in the Southern region also added:

*“We usually pass information related to the park to people on mass congregations such as church services, burials and we make sure that the people get relevant information*

*concerning the park for example, telling them to always ask for permission before seeking the park premises... It is through such gatherings and platforms that information about PA issues is shared, and this helps to reduce the cases of conflicts between the community and the PA."*

Referring to such opportunistic arrangements and confirming their existence and relevance, one local community participant in the Central region thus reported:

*"We always hold meetings in the community and engage with park authorities who train us on what is allowed and what is not allowed to be done in the park. We usually meet at wedding ceremonies and other community functions where we are told about park restrictions and regulations."*

In addition to infrastructure for addressing latent conflict with an intention for avoidance, there are provisions within the UWA/NFA structures for handling conflicts once they have occurred, mainly through: (i) provisions of the resource use agreements; and (ii) disciplinary committees; and (iii) Grievance Redress Mechanism (GRM) of the IFPA-CD project.

- (i) Provisions of the resource use agreements:** Where resource use agreements exist (under both CRM and CFM), the MOUs the communities sign with UWA or NFA have specific provisions for handling conflicts between the parties. (see e.g. section 12 (i-iv) of the Kasyoha-Kitomi CFM agreement 2008 – 2018 (extended). Communities are represented by the Resource User Committees composed of local resource users. These have powers to discipline fellow resource users/members who engage in illegal activities but are also expected to handle any grievances a member may have with the NFA/ UWA, where it is generally assumed that an amicable settlement is attained through mutual discussion between the parties. However, if the parties fail to resolve the dispute between them, the MOUs suggest that arbitration may be considered under the provisions of the Arbitration and Reconciliation Act, 2000.

Besides, and of particular importance where no resource use agreements exist, the Community conservation unit of UWA or the office of the Forest Supervisor/Manager is supposed to bridge the gap between UWA or NFA and the neighboring communities, and in the event of a conflict, conflict resolution meetings with communities are held with realistic actions reportedly taken. This is reportedly undertaken together with the local government, particularly the Local Council 1 committees. Unfortunately, most of the meetings are not minuted or documented – CFMs/CRMs may have meetings about activities happening, but they do not document their meetings. Note taking / minuting and documentation should be part of their training.

However, whereas structures exist, members in both CFM and CRM arrangements felt that PAAs largely ignore the procedures agreed upon in the respective agreements for resolving conflicts, including the disciplining of culprits. In both arrangements, local committees are the first points of contact for disciplining members in the event of an infraction, but it was reported that the PAAs frequently choose to handle these outside the existing legitimate committees of the groups and in several instances even outside the local councils. For example, one CFM group member in the central region remarked:

*"These NFA people arrest people without involving the CFM committees. They work on their own, and the committees are disregarded, yet that is contrary to what was agreed in the agreements we signed."*

Another female member of the same CFM group in the central region added:

*“One of the things we had in the agreement was like let us say we have caught someone cutting trees we would level a fine as a way of disciplining him, NFA would get [a share] and us as members get something but we have not seen this”.*

The allegation of disrespect of conflict management avenues within collaborative arrangements is widespread across the project areas sampled.

*“There was agreement on joint patrolling of CFM areas, but NFA does it alone with ulterior motives of benefitting from culprits or prosecuting them outside agreed means”.*

FGD with a women’s group in the Central region.

The local council leadership, especially the chairpersons, are instrumental in both conflict prevention and resolution. As one LC I chairperson around Kasyoha-Kitomi CFR reported:

*“As the local council chairperson, when a person reports [to me] the confiscation of anything like a panga, I help to follow up. If it is taken on the days agreed upon in the MOU for collecting firewood, I call the forest authority and retrieve it back, but if a member does not report that their pangas have been confiscated, I cannot help them”.*

- (ii) **Park grievance committees:** According to UWA KIIs, the Uganda Wildlife Authority has park grievance committees at conservation area levels chaired by the Chief warden. This committee handles grievances in its local area, including cases of misconduct. The expectation is that the committee at the conservation area level can in an objective manner identify and verify facts surrounding a conflict, draw conclusions, and consequently suggest an appropriate course of action. It is reported that the PA level committees previously had all the powers to handle conflicts involving staff including dismissal of staff if this was identified as an appropriate action, but these powers were abused and prompted the centralization of some responsibilities to the national disciplinary committee at the UWA Headquarters. For example, PA level grievance committees may now only recommend staff dismissal to the national level committee.
- (iii) **Grievance Redress Mechanism (GRM) of the IFPA-CD project:** The Project itself is establishing a GRM which stipulates the institutions, instruments, methods, and processes through which resolutions to grievances are sought and provided. The GRM establishes Village level Grievance Redress Committees (VGRCs) chaired by Parish Chiefs and with the Village Chairpersons as members and at least five other elected community members based on a third gender rule to include women, youths, and various ethnicities. At a higher level, there are Sub-County GRCs, District GRC, and the national level GRC. The reporting of the grievances starts at the village level, and the nature of grievances includes some key ones identified in this assessment, such as those relating to the behavior of staff, bribery, resource-based conflicts, and GBV. None of the communities visited mentioned the GRM or VGRCs.

### Capacity for handling conflicts

The main actors in handling UWA/NFA conflicts with local communities include the (i) local leaders particularly the LC1 chairpersons; (ii) resource use committees; (iii) responsible UWA (of the Community Conservation Unit) and NFA staff (supervisor and manager).

The **local leaders** are of primary importance in handling conflicts between UWA/NFA and communities including the Local (village) Councils (LCs) headed by the LC1 chairpersons, as LC1 is the main level of grievance redress in the mainstream government system. However, these council leaders have not received training in handling conflicts and rely on natural capacities and experience. There is thus a wide variation in the capacities, but from the experiences of the local people as recounted during this study, the capacity of the local leaders is generally low and where some efforts are made to handle the conflicts, the leaders hardly address the root causes of the conflict, usually simply encouraging the parties to the conflict to forgive each other and move on.

Further, the local leaders tend to feel less empowered to handle forest issues, and more so when one of the parties is a military or paramilitary person as commented by one CFM member around Budongo CFR:

*“... and you find that when an issue comes up in the forest, I will report to the local area chairman, but he will tell you it’s an issue to be handled by the NFA or refer you to the police, yet we no longer have police in some of the villages, thus finding no one to handle such issues.”*

The **resource use committees** under CRM in the case of UWA and CFM in the case of NFA are identified within the respective agreements as key actors in conflict resolution. However, the committee members interviewed reported having received no training in handling conflicts.

Further, the agreements are silent on the procedures to be followed in the event of conflicts involving PAAs or their partner agents (including officers of UPDF) who the committee members generally view as wielding more power and as such not in a position to engage them in the event of a conflict. This inability is perhaps best summarized in the following quote by a CFM committee member at Budongo CFR:

*“... we as CFM members we submit [our grievances] to the forest supervisors, when the forest supervisors fail [to handle them], we submit to the sector manager. But in some cases, you find that the supervisor is a party in the case and you find that there is no one to report to! The authorities also cover up [for] each other, and you find there is nothing we can do.”*

**UWA and NFA staff:** The community conservation unit and the forest supervisors/forest managers are key actors within the UWA and NFA structures respectively. From the interviews, they all have been exposed to some training in conflict training, especially in the course of their formal training. During this assessment, the team encountered evidence of successful handling of conflicts by PAA staff. However, there also are allegations of members being ineffective in handling conflicts involving their colleagues, as *“they cover up [for] each other”*.

## Potential gaps in the SOs and SOPs

### NFA SOs and UWA SOPs

The technical aspects of the Standing Orders refer to the local government and central government structures and are quite relevant to what happens with the forests but were not developed specifically to address the CFRs which are directly under the management of NFA. They thus need revision to reflect the changed institutional context of managing forests.

The UWA SOPs are currently being revised. In the existing version, it is noted that the mission statement focuses on the development and management of PAs in Uganda 'in partnership with the neighboring communities'. However, the nature of this partnership and how it is to be carried out in practice is given less attention in subsequent sessions of the SOPs which have a strong focus on enforcement of rules and regulations. The section covering community sensitization also highlights a one-way process, i.e. how UWA should communicate with and give messages to local communities.<sup>8</sup> But less attention seems to be paid to how UWA should respond to and report alleged misconduct. If more emphasis is put on proactive outreach to communities and how feedback from local communities is followed up by UWA, this could ultimately improve PAA-community relations which would be critical for addressing conflicts.

Our findings also indicate that most of the PA officers at the field (PA) level do not fully know the provisions in the SOs and SOPs. This was also confirmed in interviews with senior staff. For example, a Forest Supervisor in Moyo district admitted, "The standing orders of the National Forestry Authority? No, I do not know them." Other staff opted to mention other laws other than the SOs or SOPs we asked them to explain. A Supervisor of Lodonga CFR said:

*"For us, we depend on the Forest Act and to follow the management plan and to just use the forest for the purpose it was gazetted for. Anything done within the forest that is not under the forest policies is prohibited and punishable."*

Three UWA Wardens, one from QENP, another from Semuliki NP, and another Acting Chief Warden of QENP simply referred to the Human Resource Manual when asked them about the SOPs. The latter for example said:

*"Now definitely, if you look through our human resource manual online, you go look at it. If you seek gaps that can be improved, I encourage you to go to our human resources. We have a whole directory of human source management in Kampala, and they give us guidelines, they tell us this."*

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<sup>8</sup> However, these aspects are well covered in the Community Conservation Handbook of UWA: [https://wwfafrica.awsassets.panda.org/downloads/community\\_conservation\\_best\\_practices\\_handbook.pdf](https://wwfafrica.awsassets.panda.org/downloads/community_conservation_best_practices_handbook.pdf)

#### Section IV: Key recommendations

- All forms of misconduct on the side of the PA and communities require a comprehensive strategy of recognition, cooperation, communication, conflict resolution and community building. Based on these findings, it is important that all key actors in the conflicts in all PAs are sensitized on the relevant laws and policies, but with more emphasis on the adjacent communities and their leaders. It is also important to train both UWA/NFA staff and local communities in aspects such as communication skills, conflict resolution and transformation, inter alia. This will help improve community understanding of enforcement procedures and reduce illegal activities.
- UWA and NFA should utilize existing social platforms and events for regular communication and awareness-raising to prevent conflicts.
- If appropriately set up or strengthened, CRM /CFM groups would be a sustainable tool to reduce conflict over access to and utilization of PA resources, but these groups would have to be closely supported. It is recommended to undertake analysis of the performance of the CFM and CRMs in reducing conflict and illegal activities on PAs in IFPA-CD areas. It is important to continue strengthening the existing CRMs and CFMs and instituting them, where nonexistent.
- The SOPs and SOs could be improved. SOPs, for example, provide minimum avenues for two-way communication and collaboration with the communities. SOPs/SOs focus primarily on conflicts over wildlife management and pay less attention to other sources of conflicts, especially the forms of misconduct carried out by PAA officers.
- Trainings should be supported for the PA staff and community leaders regarding conflict resolution and knowledge of the laws and policies relating to community conservation.

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## Annex 1. Study PAs and Rationale for Selection

SN	Area name	Rationale for selection
<b>Northern Region</b>		
1	Murchison Falls NP	Uganda's largest and most popular national park, and most known for the most powerful waterfall in the world (UWA, 2016). Conflicts, especially human-wildlife, poaching, and encroachment have been reported. Interesting site because of the East African Crude Oil Pipeline being built that includes the construction of 10 oil well pads, a feeder pipeline, and a refinery in and around this park. Provides a good case to investigate conflicts between UWA & communities
2	Ajai WR	One of the few WRs in the North. There is reported encroachment on the savannah and swamps, and small scale poaching.
3	Arua CFR Barifa <sup>9</sup>	Selected as a plantation reserve in the same district, controversially licensed for production of timber, poles and establishment of an ecotourism site.
4	Mt. Kei CFR	Key Biodiversity Area of international significance. Only has small-scale human activities, but some agricultural encroachment along the southern border.
5	Lodonga CFR <sup>10</sup>	Also Aringa area but a plantation forest reserve. Has a number of encroachers as well though also licensed for timber
6	Otzi West CFR	Natural forest. It is less disturbed but has light encroached enclaves, mainly at the lower altitudes and is important for building materials, especially bamboo poles and non-timber products
<b>Central Region</b>		
7	Budongo CFR	Is part of the network of critical sites for biodiversity conservation in Uganda,. The forest is home of some globally threatened wildlife species such as chimpanzee. It is a site of contestation between local people and authorities given its central role in local people's livelihoods and its high biodiversity value (e.g. see Sandbrook et al. 2018)
8	Bugoma CFR	It is a natural forest and one of the CFRs that constitute the network of Uganda's critical biodiversity sites. Has high potential for ecotourism, and production of high value timber. It however is a key site for probable NFA-community contestations given heavy encroachment for agriculture, but also the pockets of encroachment for a nearby refugee camp.
9	Kagombe CFR	Is an important catchment forest for rivers draining into Lake Albert, but also provides connectivity to Semliki National Park via other CFRs. Was heavily encroached and a lot of evictions were done to pave way for a now very young forest. Evictions of the scale that have been done here provides a good case for understanding eviction related conflicts and how they have or could have been handled.
10	Toro Semliki WR	Is a valuable PA with a wide variety of wildlife species. It is included as a site with a previously reported case of conflict. It is also an interesting case given its settlement pattern that includes being surrounded by not less than four (4) unique local communities: the Karugutu-Kyabandara community composed of mainly the Bakonjo traditional crop farmers; the Rwebesingo community

<sup>9</sup> This reserve is not part of the IFPA-CD Project.

<sup>10</sup> This reserve is not part of the IFPA-CD Project.

SN	Area name	Rationale for selection
		composed of a pastoralist group, the Batuku; Ntoroko fishing community; and the Kasesenge Kyakabaseke community- most of whom are Bakiga migrants.
11	Kibale NP	Kibale National Park is well known as the Primate capital of the world and is a site with a well-established and long-running law enforcement programme of the UWA geared towards the protection of the prized wildlife resources therein (Plumptre et al., 2014).
12	Semuliki NP	Semuliki NP is a unique conservation area with its conditions completely different from any PA in East Africa. The forest joins with the great Ituri Forest of DR Congo, giving it unique conditions similar to the ones found in central Africa. As a result, the park has some species that are unique to central Africa. It is a top destination for birding. There are two main farming tribes (Bamba and Bakonjo) living at the boundaries of the park, but also the Batuku pastoralists and the Batwa who generally maintain regulated access to the park for their traditional use activities (MWE & UWA, 2023).
<b>Southern Region</b>		
13	QENP	A valuable PA with diverse ecosystems including Acacia savanna salt lakes, savanna grasslands, and wetlands. A key tourist destination. The park has over 95 species of mammals and over 600 bird species. It however is also a hotspot for human-PA interactions as it is encroached on for among others grazing by Basongora pastoralists.
14	Rwenzori Mountain NP	The park covers 100,000 ha extending into the Virunga National Park in the Democratic Republic of Congo, a location that gives it unique physical and climatic conditions, a recipe for unique flora and fauna, many of which are endemic to the Albertine Rift. There are two dominant tribes, the Bakonjo and Batooro. Both tribes interact with the park regularly (e.g. Tumusiime et al. 2011; Bulafu et al. 2020) and this may be a source of conflict.
15	Bwindi Impenetrable NP	This is one of the treasures of Uganda, home to one of the world's unique species – the Mt. Gorilla. The park is vulnerable to encroachment from the adjacent communities including the Batwa former forest dwellers.
16	Katonga WR	This is a recent (1998) addition to the PAs but very valuable with over 40 mammal species and over bird 150 species. Adjacent are Banyankore people who are pastoralists keeping large herds of the famous long horned Ankole cattle.
17	Kalinzu CFR	A catchment forest for several rivers, a valuable seed source of various indigenous species and generally high biodiversity including Chimpanzees and thus potential for ecotourism. Threats and possible sources of conflict include local collection of valuable local handicrafts materials and foods.
18	Kasyoha-Kitomi CFR	The reserve is surrounded by communities that tend to encroach on it in various ways. Besides using some of its precious wood resources for fuel and construction, some people are alleged to go an extra mile of attempting to claim part of Kasyoha-Kitomi land as their own. Enforcement officers face challenges with the surrounding communities in ensuring that the forest reserve is respected