

**LIVELIHOODS DERIVED FROM OKOLE WETLAND**

**BY**

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**A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS OF  
THE AWARD OF A DEGREE OF MASTER OF SCIENCE IN ENVIRONMENT AND  
NATURAL RESOURCES OF MAKERERE UNIVERSITY**

**SEPTEMBER 2006**

## **Abstract**

Okole wetland is facing intense pressure from multiple users such as cattle grazers, sand and clay miners, fishermen, craft makers, farmers, traditional healers, and developers. This study assessed the monetary values of natural and modified wetlands products, how communities prioritize these products, their willingness to conserve the wetland and the level of gender participation in utilizing the wetland products. Data were collected using a participatory rural appraisal, direct interviews and measurement of resources from extraction plots or areas.

This study shows that whether modified or intact, Okole wetland contributes significantly to the livelihood and income of the dependent communities. The average net returns per resource user per year from an intact wetland is Uganda shillings 1311.5/= which is twice that of a modified wetland of shillings 610.3. Cowpea is the highest paying product with a net return per resource user per year of Uganda shillings 1,799.160/= while water is the least at shillings 131.950/=.

Communities put priorities on wetland products that are communally shared such as water and grazing and food security related crops such as cowpeas and tomatoes. They are willing to conserve that wetland and though they do not want their current activities in the wetland stopped. Majority

of them are willing to pay Uganda shillings 5,000/= as user fees which is far less than what the National Environment (Wetlands, River banks and Lake shores management) Regulations 2000 requires of Uganda shillings 100,000/=. If this regulation is enforced none of them would afford; yet some households entirely derive their livelihoods from the wetland. About 83% of the resource users are primarily school dropouts. Thus most of them are uneducated with no formal employment. They therefore rely on utilizing the Okole wetland for their livelihoods. A t-test revealed that there is no significant difference in the level gender participation in utilizing wetlands resources. The study also found that those who depend on the wetland have slightly higher average income compared to the district average. There is therefore a need for a management plan for the Okole wetland that incorporates the needs of all stakeholders without compromising the ecological and hydrological integrity of the wetland.