

**CHALLENGES FACING THE CONSERVATION OF NATURAL
FORESTS IN UGANDA: A CASE STUDY OF MABIRA
FOREST IN MUKONO DISTRICT**

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ABSTRACT

Deforestation and forest degradation have continued over the last decades despite all the attention and efforts to implement sustainable forest management and conservation. The plight of forests, resource degradation, declining biodiversity and the impact of decreasing forest resources have continued up today. The study aimed at investigating the challenges facing the conservation of natural forests in Uganda by identifying the existing policies and laws governing natural forests, a case study of Mabira forest. Mabira Forest Reserve lies in the counties of Buikwe and Nakifuma in the administrative district of Mukono. The objectives of the study included; identifying the policies and laws regarding the conservation of natural forests on Uganda and relate them to the dangers of deforestation, to discuss from an ethical perspective the policies and laws that have been established in Uganda to ensure that the objectives of conserving natural forests are attained and to recommend ways and means of ensuring that these policies and laws can be better enforced.

The methodology used to carry out the research consisted of questionnaires, interviews, observations and sources from the library with focus on previous studies carried out on the related subject.

The findings showed that, almost all the local people living near Mabira Forest solely depend on forest resources for their survival, hence over exploitation of forest resources. The major source of income in the community is charcoal obtaining 40.3%, followed by timber 31.7% and firewood 28.3%. However, it also showed that 63.3% participate in the conservation of natural forests while 36.7% don't. Those who said no indicated that they are not sensitized on the importance of natural forests, illiteracy, unemployment and others think it's the work of the government to protect and plant trees.

From the findings, it showed that majority of forest officials are also involved in the destruction of natural forests. This is attributed to corruption which has led to increasing rate of deforestation despite the presence and formation of National Forestry Authority. For an effective and efficient

management and conservation of natural forests, there is need for a multidisciplinary and inter sectoral approach for sustainable forest resource management and conservation.