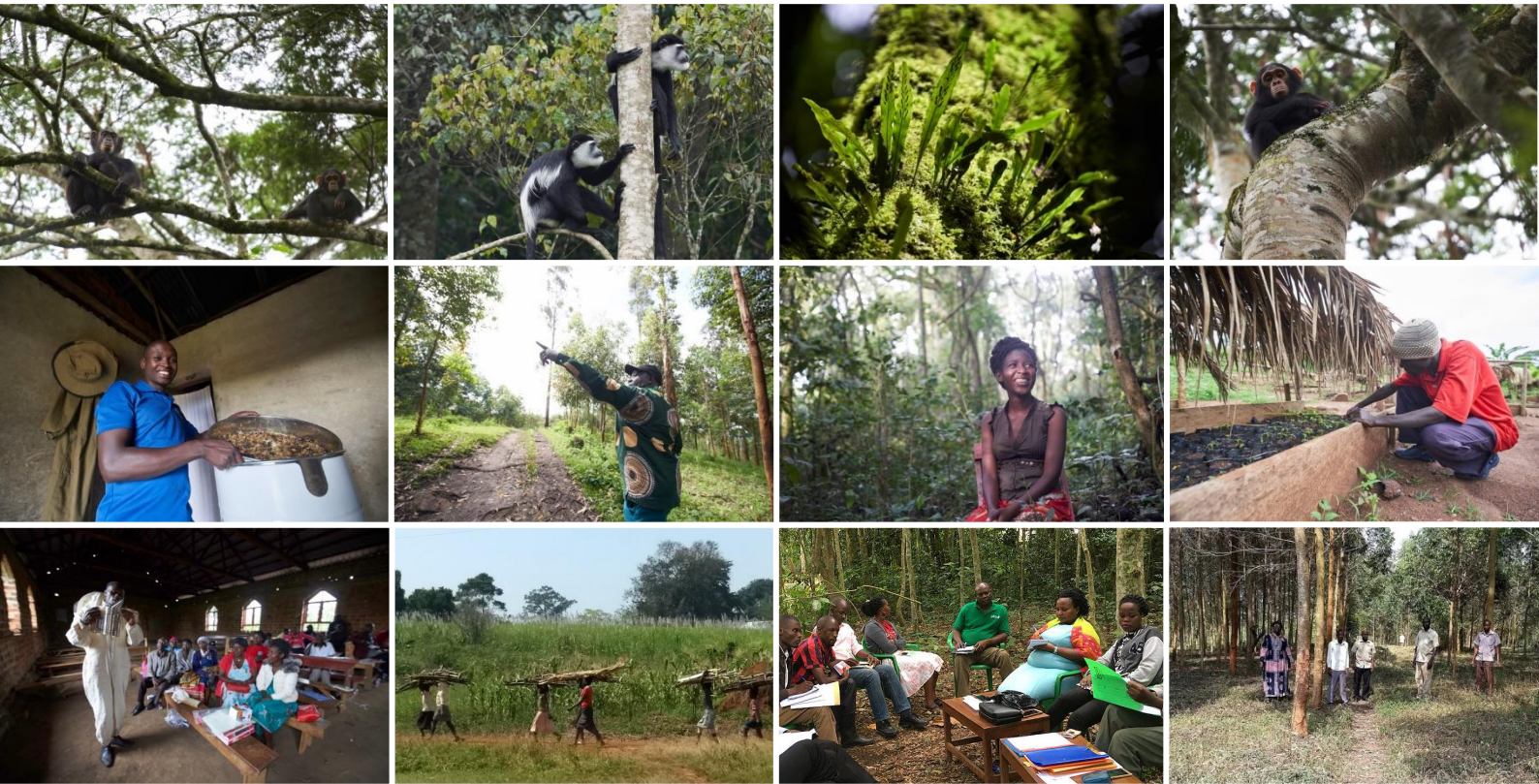




Government of Uganda
Ministry of Water and Environment



A REVIEW OF COLLABORATIVE FOREST MANAGEMENT IN UGANDA

OVERVIEW

January 2020

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A summary of key findings and recommendations from the first national review of
Collaborative Forest Management in Uganda



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Acronyms

CBO	Community Based Organisation
CFM	Collaborative Forest Management
CFR	Central Forest Reserve
COFSDA	Conserve for future Sustainable Development Association
FSSD	Forest Sector Support Department
KASUFU	Kabende Sustainable Forest Users Group
KICODA	Kapeeka Integrated Community Development Association
KIFECA	Kajuma Itwara Farmers and Environmental Conservation Association
LFR	Local Forest Reserve
MEMA	Mpenja Environmental Management Association
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
MWE	Ministry of Water and Environment
NACOB	Nagajje Community Based Biodiversity Association
NECODA	Nyakase Environmental Conservation and Development Association
NFA	National Forestry Authority
NFSS	National Forest Stewardship Standards
NFTPA	Uganda National Forestry and Tree Planting Act
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NNTG	Ndangara Nyakibanja Tutungikye Group
UGX	Uganda Shilling



Echuya forest in south-western Uganda is highly biodiverse and co-managed by NFA and four Collaborative Forest Management Groups

Executive Summary

Uganda is facing an alarming deforestation rate, with forest cover declining from nearly one quarter to less than one tenth of the country's land area between 1990 and 2015. Uganda's forests hold critical biodiversity and are central to the country's economy and people's livelihoods, especially for the 80% of the population living in rural areas and relying on rain-fed agriculture and natural resource utilisation. **Urgent action is needed to enhance forest conservation and reforestation in ways that sustainably support and improve rural livelihoods, i.e. achieve both climate change mitigation and adaptation simultaneously.** Collaborative Forest Management (CFM) can play a critical role in achieving these ends.

Collaborative Forest Management aims to establish a mutually agreed upon and beneficial relationship between an eligible local community group and the governing authority of either a Central Forest Reserve (CFR) or a Local Forest Reserve (LFR) i.e., the "responsible body". The National Forestry Authority (NFA) is the "responsible body" for CFRs, and LFRs fall under the jurisdiction of district local governments. Under the terms of a CFM agreement, the CFM group takes on specific responsibilities, for example, forest patrolling and management, in exchange for specific benefits, for example, access to forest resources and forest land for tree growing. The responsible body, in turn, takes on the responsibility to support the CFM group and respect and deliver on agreed benefits. CFM is grounded in shared roles/responsibilities, rights, returns (benefits) and relationships – the '4R' framework.

This summary highlights key **CFM successes and challenges in Uganda**. It then proposes a 'road map' for **decision-makers** in government, NGOs, development partner organisations and the private sector to help take CFM to scale in sustainable, effective and equitable ways. It is based on and aims to summarise the key content of the country's **first comprehensive review of CFM**, hereafter "the review" (Kazoora et al., 2019), which assesses the impact and process of implementing CFM to date and generates options for how CFM can be substantially strengthened going forward.

Despite substantial data gaps, the last 15 years' experience demonstrates that CFM has the potential to deliver on many of its objectives, including **supporting forest conservation, reforestation and improved livelihoods**, through formalised access to forest resources and enhanced income and food security. However, the **scope of CFM implementation remains limited and uneven**. While over 300 groups are engaged in CFM, over half are concentrated in just one (of nine) NFA forest ranges. Further, there are a number of **pressing challenges in how CFM is being implemented** – these include:

- the frequent lack of finalisation, maintenance and renewal of CFM agreements,
- very limited scope and coherence of funding,
- a substantial under-realisation of the generation and sharing of benefits,
- significant weaknesses in NFA's and CFM groups' implementation capacity and governance, and
- the low extent, quality and consistency of monitoring.

Overall, the CFM review shows the clear need and opportunity to expand the reach of CFM for the benefit of forests and adjacent communities, as well as the need for substantial changes to how CFM is coordinated, funded and implemented, to help ensure that this expansion is sustainable, effective and equitable.

Based on these findings, the proposed road map for enabling CFM to be successfully achieved at scale includes the following recommendations, which while focusing on NFA – since it is taking the lead on CFM, could equally apply to local governments or even private forest owners:

1. **NFA should finalise all unsigned CFM agreements, additionally review and appropriately renew expired CFM agreements;** as part of this, NFA should support CFM groups to develop realistic development plans through streamlining the CFM agreement process and developing a phased approach to the development of CFM groups
2. **Achieve sufficient, coordinated, and strategically diversified CFM financing,** through allocating greater funding to CFM from NFA's own resources, promoting a broader outlook for leveraging CFM financing from across government, and seeking new approaches to financing for CFM including in partnership with the private sector
3. **Generate greater, more diversified and more equitably distributed opportunities and benefits for CFM groups,** through NFA developing and implementing clear benefit sharing guidelines for CFM, and working with NGO and other partners to support the development of forest-related enterprises and market linkages with CFM groups
4. **NFA should play the leading role in planning, managing and promoting CFM,** including through working closely with local governments in formalised partnerships, building strong understanding and support for CFM amongst its own staff, and allocating a viable level of staff resources to support and promote CFM.
5. **Better coordinate the activities of CFM-support organisations and improve their level of accountability and transparency** through establishing and managing an overarching coordination mechanism for all CFM stakeholders, and requiring that all supporting NGO partners have valid MoUs, are accountable and transparent in implementing their agreed CFM support activities, share information, and have agreed exit strategies when their support comes to an end.
6. **NFA should improve the capacity and effectiveness of CFM groups and enhance the support they receive,** through ensuring that CFM groups have impartial advice in negotiating CFM agreements and that, critically, they are provided with progressive and appropriately designed support in implementing their CFM agreements
7. **Strengthen the overall level of CFM governance** through NFA delivering on the spirit and commitments it has made in existing CFM agreements, improving the quality and quantity of information provided to CFM groups, and requiring that CFM groups provide regular reports about their status, progress and activities as part of understanding their needs and tracking their progress
8. **Promote the development of grassroot CFM networks through civil society** making a long-term and committed investment to supporting the legitimacy, development and effectiveness of CFM groups and networks in strengthening information sharing, advocacy and forest governance
9. **Enhance monitoring of CFM for assessment and learning,** through NFA developing and implementing a straightforward and effective monitoring and learning framework for CFM together with its partners
10. **Strengthen the CFM enabling environment** through NFA ensuring that CFR management plans and supporting management arrangements are up-to-date and valid, enabling CFM to be implemented as designed.

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A full version of the report can be found online at <http://www.nfa.org.ug>

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Many forest reserves are under continuous threat of encroachment: Collaborative Forest Management can help prevent and stop forest loss

1 Introduction

Uganda is facing an alarming deforestation rate. Between 1990 and 2015, forest cover declined from nearly one quarter to less than one tenth of the country's land area¹. Over the last 25 years, Uganda has lost about 60% of its standing forests and, on average, over 100,000 hectares of forest are currently being lost annually. Uganda's forests hold critical biodiversity and are central to the country's economy and people's livelihoods, especially the 80% of the population living in rural areas and relying on rain-fed agriculture and natural resource utilisation. **Urgent action is therefore needed to enhance forest conservation and reforestation in ways that sustainably support and improve rural livelihoods, achieving both climate change mitigation and adaptation simultaneously.**

Collaborative Forest Management (CFM) can play a critical role in achieving these ends. CFM is concentrated in Central Forest Reserves (CFRs), which currently conserve 25% of the country's standing forest. As private forests rapidly diminish², and with a fast-growing rural population, pressure on the CFRs is intensifying. In this context, CFM is a key mechanism for helping to safeguard CFRs, and as of yet, an underutilised policy tool for supporting forest conservation, sustainable use, and reforestation, curbing further forest loss while contributing to sustainable livelihoods.³

This document highlights key **CFM successes and challenges in Uganda**. It then proposes a 'road

map' for decision-makers in government, NGOs, development partner organisations, and the private sector to help take CFM to scale in sustainable, effective and equitable ways. It is based on and aims to summarise the key content of the country's **first comprehensive review of CFM** (hereafter, "the review"). The Review of Collaborative Forest Management in Uganda (Kazoora et al., 2019) assesses the impact and process of implementing CFM to date and generates options for how CFM can be substantially strengthened going forward.

Box 1: What is CFM?

With the broad vision of improving forest conservation and the livelihoods of forest adjacent communities, CFM aims to establish a mutually agreed upon and beneficial relationship between an eligible local community group and the governing authority of a CFR, Local Forest Reserve (LFR) or private forest (i.e., the "responsible body"). Specifically, it enables one or several forest user groups (a "CFM group") to negotiate and enter into an agreement with a responsible body. Under the terms of this agreement, the CFM group takes on specific responsibilities, e.g., forest patrolling and management, in exchange for specific benefits, e.g., access to forest resources and forest land. The responsible body, in turn, takes on the responsibility to support the CFM group and respect and deliver on agreed benefits.

¹ Ministry of Water and Environment (2016). Forest Investment Program for Uganda. Government of Uganda.

² The country's forested protected areas have registered a forest cover loss of 30.2%, since 1990, while private land has seen a forest cover loss of 80.1% during this period (MWE, 2016). Devolved forest management in private forests – while critically important – is currently less easily scalable primarily because of land tenure issues and adverse land economy incentives. For example, the

ownership of remaining areas of forest may be contested. In principal, the Land Act provides for Community Land Associations that can register and then manage a communally / collectively owned forest as a community (private) forest, which is especially relevant for northern Uganda.

³ Although this report focusses on CFM, some of its recommendations are relevant for collaborative and community-based forest management in private forests, particularly those that are registered.

2 An Overview of CFM Principles and Practice

The Uganda National Forestry and Tree Planting Act (NFTPA) of 2003 formalised CFM, building on a pilot programme which ran from 1998-2003. The NFTPA defines CFM as, “a mutually beneficial arrangement” grounded in shared roles, responsibilities, rights and returns (benefits) – the ‘4R’ framework. CFM has four main components:

1. **Design and negotiation**
2. **Implementation**
3. **Monitoring and enforcement** and
4. **Evaluation and learning,**

These are underpinned by the following principles:

- ‘Learning by doing’
- Meaningful participation and shared learning
- Appropriate representation and responsibilities
- Building capacity for change
- Long-term perspective and shared ownership
- Transparent communication, including with marginalised people

CFM is meant to contribute to the realisation of the following NFTPA objectives:

- Safeguarding **forest biodiversity and associated benefits** for inter-generational equity
- Promoting **improved livelihoods** through development of the forest sector
- Encouraging and facilitating **public participation** in forest management and conservation
- Raising **public awareness** of the diverse benefits of conserving and increasing forest cover
- Ensuring **sustainable supply** of forest products and services by maintaining a sufficient forest area
- Promoting **equitable sharing** of forest benefits, focusing on vulnerable groups

As a result of these objectives, CFM is expected to:

- **Reduce conflicts** between government and forest adjacent communities
- **Establish fair terms** for access rights and the distribution of benefits, responsibilities and decision-making in forests
- **Ensure fair distribution** of the costs of forest management
- **Enable sharing knowledge** and skills between responsible bodies, CFM groups and partners
- **Create a sense of ownership** and promote local people’s security of tenure over forest resources

Despite substantial data gaps, the last 15 years’ experience demonstrates that, while it has not done so to the extent needed, CFM can deliver on many of these objectives, including **supporting forest conservation, reforestation and improved livelihoods**, through formalised access to forest resources and enhanced income and food security. Getting to these positive results involves a number of stakeholders (see table opposite).

However, the **scope of CFM implementation remains limited and uneven**. While over 300 groups are engaged in CFM, over half are concentrated in just one (of nine) NFA forest ranges (see Figure 1). Further, there are a number of **pressing challenges in how CFM is being implemented** – these include:

- The frequent lack of finalisation, maintenance and renewal of CFM agreements
- Very limited scope and coherence of funding
- A substantial under-realisation of the generation and sharing of benefits
- Significant weaknesses in NFA’s and CFM groups’ implementation capacity and governance
- The low extent, quality and consistency of monitoring

These strengths and challenges are explored in more depth in the sections that follow.

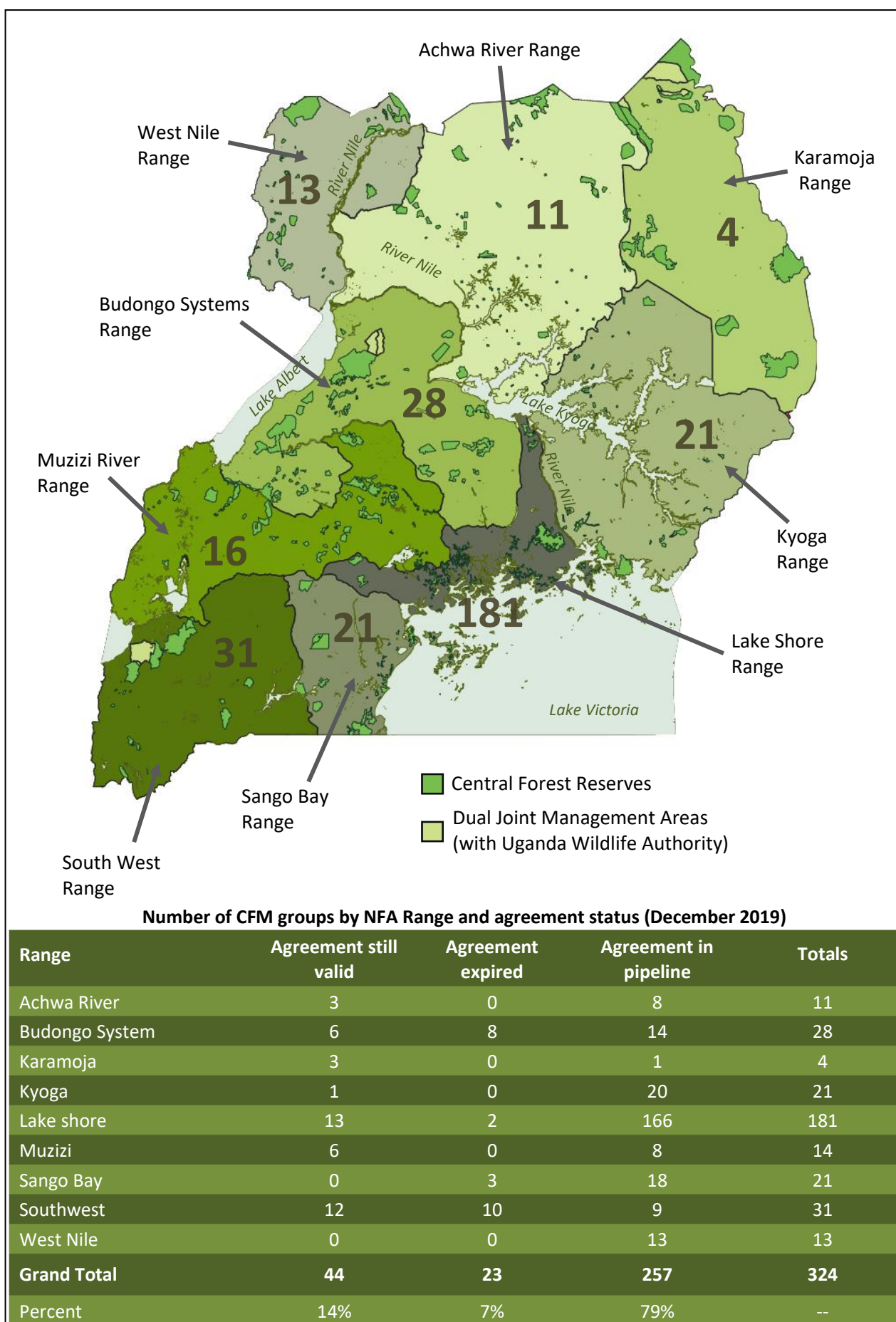
Overall, the CFM review shows the clear need and opportunity to expand the reach of CFM for the benefit of forests and adjacent communities, as well as the need for substantial changes to how CFM is coordinated, funded and implemented in

order to help ensure this expansion is sustainable, effective and equitable.

The next section highlights inter-related strengths and challenges in current CFM policy and practice. These form the basis for the recommendations in the proposed CFM 'road map' that follows.

Stakeholder	Primary Roles
Forest user groups	Enter into agreements with a responsible body to contribute to and benefit from forest conservation and management, based on negotiated rights and opportunities / benefits
Forest Sector Support Department (FSSD) – Ministry of Water and Environment (MWE)	Policy and over forest sector regulation Regulating NFA and reviewing its performance contract Overseeing the District Forest Services at local government level
National Forestry Authority (NFA)	Overall coordination and monitoring of CFM Responsible body for CFM in CFRs Mobilising and supporting CFM across Uganda
Local Government	Responsible body for CFM in LFRs Registering community-based organisations (to then become CFM groups) Providing support in building strong community institutions Witnessing and participating in CFM agreement signing ceremonies Mobilising and supporting CFM on the ground
Private Forest Owners	Responsible body for CFM in privately owned forests
Non-governmental organisations (NGOs)	Providing financial, technical and facilitation support for CFM, often in context of broader projects
Development Partners and funding initiatives	Providing financial (and sometimes technical support) for CFM, often in the context of broader projects within and outside the forest sector
Other Private Sector actors	Can enter into partnerships with CFM groups for, e.g., forest-related enterprise development as a component of CFM

Figure 1: CFM groups (formal and informal) by NFA Ranges as of September 2018



3 Learning from CFM Strengths and Challenges

3.1 CFM Agreements and Plans

Key Issues:

Over 300 groups are engaged in CFM. However, over 85% of these lack valid agreements, with some groups having waited for over a decade. The lengthy agreement development process creates unnecessary and undesirable risks for CFM groups and NFA.

CFM groups generally lack long-term, practical development and monitoring plans. This can lead to groups taking on unrealistic commitments and expectations, among other concerns. However, some groups have developed and are implementing such plans, which can serve as examples.

The unsatisfactory status of CFM agreements needs to be addressed

The CFM review identified over 300 groups, some more active than others. However, less than 15% of CFM groups have valid agreements in place (see Figure 1). The vast majority of groups are somewhere in the negotiation process, with some groups having been in the pipeline for over a decade. Other CFM groups are operating under expired agreements. The process of finalising agreements has been slow for a number of reasons. Among these is that NFA initially built in long 'trial periods' to test how CFM agreements would work in practice and to give time for trust to build between partners. This approach is now presenting an unnecessary barrier to having clear, mutually accountable and enforceable agreements in place. It creates unnecessary risks for both CFM groups (e.g., as 'interim' access rights could be lost at any time and certain services or benefits may not be available in the absence of finalised agreements) and responsible bodies (e.g., as informal arrangements are more difficult to enforce and monitor). The CFM Guidelines rightly call for a 'learning by doing' approach. However, this learning should be

continually incorporated into CFM, including leading up to and especially after agreements are formalised⁴.

Box 2: Lack of formalised CFM agreements can hinder CFM groups' access to opportunities and benefits

CFM groups typically cannot access negotiated benefits until agreements are signed. For example, the North Budongo Forest Communities Association waited over four years for their negotiated agreement with NFA to be formalised, and thus to access those benefits. Lack of formalisation can also hinder access to related opportunities. For example, in Mpanga sector, the Mpanga Environmental Management Association, comprised of eleven CFM groups, failed to qualify for a loan from Centenary bank to harvest and market their established woodlots and, thereafter, expand their plantation. Seven out of the eleven groups lacked CFM agreements with NFA. The bank denied the loan due to the perceived risk that the Association did not have full legal rights to harvest the woodlots.

⁴ While formalisation of agreements is important, it is not necessarily sufficient to ensure full access to benefits. For example, due to, *inter alia*, lack of benefit sharing guidelines, CFM groups are

sometimes unable to access key negotiated benefits, such as from sustainable timber harvesting, even when the agreements are formalised.

CFM groups should have pragmatic development plans with tangible and growing benefits

Most groups do not develop or maintain implementation or monitoring plans, aside from what is in the initial CFM agreement. This can hinder their ability to fully realize their objectives and meet responsibilities. Further, agreements typically do not consider the cost-effectiveness of planned activities or the CFM group's capacity to carry them out. (This may be in part because these issues are not yet reflected in the CFM Guidelines.) CFM groups can, as a result, take on unachievable responsibilities or expectations. Experience has shown the merits of starting out with plans that are straightforward and relatively easily achieved, and which can be subsequently further developed as group capacity and buy-in develops. Some CFM groups are developing more advanced plans (see Box 3) and these can serve as examples for others in the future. Increasingly, these plans extend beyond the forest boundary to

combine both forest- and forest-edge (farm) activities to enhance farm-forest links and the sustainability and scale of CFM livelihood activities, such as shade-grown coffee.

Box 3: Some CFM Groups are developing strategic plans and monitoring their own progress

The Ndangara Nyakiyanja Tutungikye Group (NNTG) (Rubirizi District) has a robust strategic plan. This enabled them to pursue more coordinated and long-term benefits from CFM, including forming a landscape learning group and planning forest and non-forest-based value-add activities.

NNTG, Matiri Natural Resources Users and Income Enhancement Association (MANRUIA), Nyangole, and Kapeeka Integrated Community Development Association (KICODA) CFM groups all have monitoring plans in place, enabling them to learn and adapt their operations based on experience.



Some members of Wambabya CFM group standing in their forest boundary Eucalyptus plantation, western Uganda

3.2 CFM Financing

Key Issues:

To date, CFM has been funded by a variety of sources in an ad hoc manner, often as a component of larger initiatives. There is clear need for substantially increasing CFM funding and for improving its coordination. This can be achieved in part through identifying and better targeting the different types of funding available in relation to the stage of development and specific needs of each CFM group. For example, CFM groups at an early stage of development can best benefit from grants to build their skills and organisational capacity. As groups mature, they can better benefit from access to affordable credit/loans in support of their emerging forest- and farm-based enterprises and value chain development.

While well-planned CFM should generate benefits (as further discussed below) it also requires investment upfront and on an ongoing basis. In recent years, CFM activities have been funded by a variety of sources from within and outside the forest sector, and across government, NGO, private sector and development partner (particularly multi-lateral) initiatives. Some CFM groups are also raising funds for their own initiatives (see Box 4).

To date, most of the funding made available to CFM groups has been in the form of grants, which have been appropriate and instrumental in helping CFM groups establish themselves, improve their basic skills, carry out sustainable livelihood activities and improve their organisational development. However, as groups develop, they should be encouraged and enabled to access affordable credit and loans in support of their emerging forest- and farm-based livelihoods, enterprises and value chains, complementing their own savings and credit efforts. In other words, in most instances, CFM groups should generally progress from grants towards savings- and loans-based funding as their skills, enterprises, group organisation and financial acumen develop.

Lack of sufficient, ongoing funding has been a barrier to providing adequate support to existing CFM groups, in significant part because there is not an overarching funding coordination mechanism or awareness of need beyond the

organisations actively involved in supporting CFM. Instead, support for CFM has often been realised as a small component of broader conservation and development projects. These projects typically have different approaches and objectives and begin and end independently of long-term

Box 4: While CFM funding is insufficient, some groups are raising funds for their own initiatives

In some cases, CFM groups have raised funds for CFM activities. The Nyakase Environmental Conservation and Development Association (NECODA) (Mabira CFR) applied for and secured funds from the Private Sector Foundation (PSF) under the Skilling Uganda Program. Other groups have raised funds from local government funding initiatives. For example, MANRUIA CFM group (Kyenjojo CFR), Nkinga CFM group (Mpanga CFR) and Mpenja Environmental Management Association (MEMA) CFM group (Gomba District) have made proposals and received funding under the government's Community Driven Development (CDD) initiative. Nkalwe CFM (Kigona CFR) raised funds from civil society for the construction of their current office building. Each group in Mpanga CFR collected UGX 3 million from members to fund their CFM signing ceremony. Some groups have also received grants from NGOs to serve as seed capital for local credit cooperatives, such as the groups in Echuya CFR and Malabigambo CFR, with funds coming from Nature Uganda and Fauna and Flora International respectively.

and ongoing CFM development processes. As a result, CFM groups are often begun but then left without support at a stage of development where they are unable to independently move forward. This has contributed to a lack of coherence in how CFM has been developed thus far, with many CFM groups facing an uncertain future with dashed hopes and expectations.

CFM funding is also hindered by a lack of information. CFM groups often do not know about funding opportunities, including at the local government level and across different sectors, assuming that they have the capacity to fulfil the necessary conditions for accessing this funding. The fact that CFM is often a (relatively small) part

of larger projects, and thus not a key focus of project communications, has also partly limited donors' and even government's knowledge of the opportunities and challenges of CFM as an effective conservation and development approach.

In summary, there is urgent need to increase the scope, coordination and diversity of financing options to maintain trust and continuity in CFM and to further scale it up. The most practical option for doing so may be to leverage the current, scattered funding sources in more strategic, harmonized and coordinated ways. Some tangible ideas for doing so are shared in the road map at the end of this summary.

3.3 CFM Impacts - Generating and Sharing Benefits for Forests and People

Key Issues:

At many individual sites, CFM is contributing to forest conservation (e.g., through tree planting and increased patrolling and reporting) and local livelihoods (e.g., access to land for tree growing) and increasing forest management capacity (e.g., for boundary management).

There are also concerns with the scope and distribution of benefits (and costs) across and within CFM groups. NFA has drafted benefit sharing guidelines for CFM, which may partly address these concerns once they are approved and adopted. However, to ensure improved and sustained outcomes, including reduced pressure on CFRs, there is also a need to support the generation of greater and more diversified benefits from CFM, particularly through sustainable enterprise development.

There are major data gaps, making it difficult to draw broader conclusions about CFMs' impacts beyond site-level experiences. More and better monitoring is needed, together with platforms for sharing information and learning.

Types of CFM benefits for forests and livelihoods

Funding, while important, is not in itself sufficient to sustain CFM at scale. CFM must also *generate* (monetary and non-monetary) benefits which meet the varying expectations of each CFM group. Based on a review of site-level experiences, some

of the benefits / positive impacts of CFM to date include:

- More **secure resource access** rights and increased and diversified activities that contribute to **sustainable livelihoods**, such as firewood and herbal medicine collection and access to land for tree and crop (*taungya* system⁵) growing in CFRs, as well as some,

⁵ The *taungya* system enables the planting of tree seedlings and crops together, with the aim that the crops provide a useful short-term benefit for tree

planters for the first 1-3 years, while the tree seedlings establish and grow into saplings.

though still quite limited, forest and non-forest enterprises (e.g., beekeeping) and credit cooperative groups

- **Some benefits shared with CFM group members' broader communities**, such as community access to the Conserve for Future Sustainable Development Association's (COFSDA's) community hall (Mabira CFR), membership in the NNTG Savings and Credit Cooperative Organization (SACCO) and, in the longer term, enhanced and more secure ecosystem services
- **Enhanced natural forest conservation, increased tree cover and decreased pressure on CFRs**, with some groups and individuals beginning to practice activities adopted in CFM on their own (private) land, e.g., seedling growing and distribution and tree growing, such as the bamboo now being grown by the Bufundi Echuya Forest Conservation and Livelihood Improvement Association (BECLA)
- **Additional forest management capacity**, which helps NFA's forest management activities and reduces their cost
- **More positive (trusting and cooperative) relationships** between communities and NFA, as reflected in stronger collaboration on forest management, reduced conflict between NFA and CFM groups, a stronger sense of community responsibility for forest protection (e.g., reporting of illegal activity) and greater recognition and appreciation of community contributions to forest conservation.

Distribution of opportunities and benefits across CFM sites

Benefits arising from CFM must be fairly shared if CFM is to meet its objectives. NFA (with support

from CARE) has drafted Benefit Sharing Guidelines for CFRs in Uganda. However, these have not yet been approved, and are therefore not yet being implemented. In looking at experiences across CFM sites, the review found both positive examples and recurring inadequacies with the scope and distribution of benefits.

Across Uganda, CFM benefits are unevenly distributed in part because CFM areas and capacities are unevenly distributed. Over 50% of CFM groups are concentrated in the Lakeshore Range. This is part because the only CFM Supervisor operating at the range level, who is working hard to facilitate CFM, is located in the Lakeshore Range.⁶ However, while there are fewer groups elsewhere, some of the most successful are those that have been supported by NGOs in western Uganda. Overall, this highlights the importance of the capacity and commitment of responsible bodies (i.e., NFA and, in the future, local governments) in bringing CFM to scale.

Potential benefits differ depending on the status and management plans of the forest in which CFM is taking place. For example, groups tend to find CFM more beneficial in CFRs designated for plantation development (where they can access land for tree and food growing and harvesting) as compared to CFRs designated solely for natural forest conservation (where CFM groups' forest activities are more restricted, e.g., to fuel wood and medical plant collection). While such differences cannot be eliminated, they can be mitigated to some extent. One option is to prioritise CFM in areas where conservation activities can be combined with tree growing, e.g., in some grassland patches and along CFR boundaries, contingent on guidance set out in CFR management plans. Another option could be for CFM groups to be incentivized to maintain and/or improve forest condition in core natural forests (zoned as nature reserves or for low impact use)

⁶ Another key reason for the large number of CFM groups in the Lakeshore Range is that CFM was introduced here in large part to formalise and establish better management of widespread

informal and illegal use of CFRs for food-crop growing, a practice that allegedly had been encouraged by local politicians.

with otherwise low levels of benefit potential, either through a payments scheme and/or provision of support to ongoing community development initiatives.

Benefits also differ depending on the CFM agreements, including:

- **The forest resources that CFM groups negotiate rights to:** For example, natural forests that are ‘well stocked’ (i.e., not degraded) with sustainable use zones *should* offer CFM groups greater benefits than degraded ones because more resources can be sustainably extracted from them. However, while CFM groups have been able to ostensibly negotiate access to these benefits in CFM agreements (e.g., access to sustainable timber and charcoal), in practice, access to these resources is often not provided, due in part to the lack of clear benefit sharing guidelines. Further, in some cases, external contractors have successfully tendered for resources in forest compartments managed by CFM groups when they are advertised by NFA.
- **The mix of forest and non-forest (and monetary and non-monetary) opportunities and benefits:** Many CFM arrangements are not designed to substantially and sustainably contribute to improved livelihoods. With some exceptions, agreements do not go beyond formalizing CFM groups’ rights to gather forest resources (e.g., wood fuel). Yet these forest resources are increasingly inadequate. Contemporary CFM approaches should require knowledge and skills for developing alternative enterprise options (both forest and forest-edge), value addition and marketing aimed at improving the livelihoods of communities adjacent to the CFRs, including reducing the pressure on forest resources. Some enterprises have been developed, such as bee keeping and craft making, but these remain largely subsistence activities. Further, some CFM groups are beginning to seek partnership

opportunities with the private sector, though this aspiration has a long way to go.

- **Access to additional opportunities for forest-adjacent communities:** For example, NFA periodically issues land licences to private companies and individuals to undertake forestry business activities in CFRs – particularly plantation forestry (tree growing) in return for land rent. Recently, this has caused a substantial level of conflict between NFA, CFM groups and local communities. CFM groups and local community members feel that they were not given sufficient opportunity to apply to lease the forest blocks, which they help manage or live adjacent to. Instead, they allege that this opportunity was given to rich elites from outside their local areas, disenfranchising them from much needed economic opportunity and further involvement in managing and benefiting from their CFR(s).

More can be done to address these kinds of discrepancies in negotiated and realised benefits, including ensuring that CFM groups have sufficient information about their options during CFM agreement negotiations. They should also be provided the requisite support to subsequently access unfolding opportunities in CFRs (such as tree growing) that sustainably support their livelihoods and which can be conditionally linked to their track-record in forest stewardship and

Box 5: CFM is delivering mutual benefits

In many sites, including in Budongo, Itwara, Kalinzu, Kasyoha-Kitoomi and Wambabya CFRs, CFM groups are planting trees along forest boundaries and/or in grassland patches. This reduces the collection of timber and firewood from the natural forest, thus contributing to conservation. CFM group boundary plantings also reduce NFA’s boundary maintenance costs. The CFM groups expect to harvest these trees, and they will need to be replanted. Assuming that they are, this arrangement is mutually beneficial for both CFM groups and NFA.

management, and caveated with safeguards, for example, to prevent subsequent capture by third-parties.

Revenue sharing with CFM groups and local governments

As CFM groups' interest in monetary benefits from CFM grow, new questions and challenges are arising about equitable benefit sharing. While there has been some revenue sharing between NFA and CFM groups on a discretionary basis (see Box 6), there is no set NFA policy or guidance for doing so. Conflicts have arisen, in particular, where CFM groups demand, and are not given, shares of NFA (or private sector) revenues to which they have directly or indirectly contributed through their forest stewardship efforts. For example, where CFM groups and private sector actors are growing trees in the same or adjacent areas, CFM groups contribute to protecting private tree lots, e.g., through fire management/protection. In recognition of this, CFM groups are increasingly seeking a share of NFA's permitting fees and/or the private grower's tree sale revenues. Similarly, some CFM groups have recently sought a share of revenue from eco-tourism enterprises in CFRs, based on their contributions to managing the surrounding forest. Concerns have also been raised about insufficient revenue sharing between NFA and local government including where local government supports or facilitates CFM activities in CFRs, e.g. registering local organizations, supporting conflict resolution, issuing timber movement permits or other responsibilities that enable the flow of forest benefits.

If NFA was to agree to more revenue sharing arrangements with CFM groups and local governments, it would need to be specific about the sources of sharable revenue and the formula(e) governing its distribution, ensuring arrangements were consistent with existing law and/or reflected in approved institutional policy for benefit sharing arrangements. However, a key challenge is that, for a number of reasons, NFA

has never been able to collect sufficient revenue to cover its operational costs.

Distribution of benefits by CFM groups

Some groups have well established and equitable benefit sharing arrangements in place. However, the experiences of other CFM groups raise two key concerns about the distribution of benefits among members:

- **Distribution of benefits to often marginalised people** – while women participate in CFM in various ways, on the whole, women, youth, and other vulnerable groups tend to benefit less in many CFM arrangements, in part because their interests and needs may not be adequately considered in negotiation and decision-making processes (as discussed in more detail later)
- **Poor CFM group governance** – leading to intra-group disputes over the control and distribution of benefits, which has sometimes led to CFM groups splintering.

Box 6: Examples of revenue sharing between NFA and CFM groups on discretionary basis

In Budongo CFR, the Budongo Good Neighbours Conservation Association (BUNCA) was given logs that had been harvested and graded for sale by NFA. This was done in recognition of their contribution to the forest's management and of the fact that BUNCA would have been unable to raise the money to compete in the bidding process. In isolated cases, NFA staff have also rewarded informers for whistle-blowing, particularly where confiscation of forest produce has occurred and/or arrests have been made. In Echuya CFR, NFA has also allowed Batwa community members to harvest a head lot of bamboo per day, an amount that exceeds subsistence needs so that some bamboo can also be sold for income. In Mabira CFR, Nagojje Community Based Biodiversity Association (NACOBBA) was given UGX 8 million from the sale of planted trees in a CFM-managed area before the signing of their CFM agreement, in recognition of the group's patrol efforts.

Both these shortcomings can be addressed through the provision of better facilitation and support to CFM groups by NFA and NGOs.

Friction has also arisen between some CFM groups and members of their broader communities, e.g. where CFM group members are perceived as having unfair preferential access to forest resources and/or where other community members cannot join CFM groups due to high membership fees or other barriers that the CFM groups have put in place themselves to reflect the increasing value of their CFR-based forest assets.

Benefit and cost trade-offs

Depending on the CFM agreement structure, upfront investments (e.g., in time, labour, membership fees, etc.) can be high for community members, while benefits (e.g., from tree planting or more general ecosystem services) can take substantially longer to materialise. Some group members report that current returns from CFM are not commensurate with their responsibilities

of protecting the forest, especially in relatively well stocked natural forests like Mabira, Itwara and Sango Bay. This is because CFM groups in these natural forest sites carry out forest conservation activities with little opportunity to benefit economically. For example, they are unable to harvest timber in these relatively well stocked forests because NFA lacks the resources to undertake the forest inventory needed to plan sustainable harvesting and natural forest tending.

Better monitoring to understand nature and scope of CFM impacts

The preceding observations are based primarily on site-level observations made in the course of the CFM review. There is very little systematic data about the impact and outcomes of CFM for forests or livelihoods. This points to the pressing need for more and better monitoring and knowledge management in CFM (as further discussed later on).



Community members carrying firewood from Budongo CFR which their CFM agreement allows them to collect once a week

3.4 Government Commitment and Capacity for CFM

Key Issues:

While engagement with and capacity for supporting CFM has generally been considerably higher in NFA than in local governments or among private forest owners, there is a pressing need for strengthened capacity across all responsible bodies, complemented by greater levels of resourcing.

Likewise, a small number of CFM groups have demonstrated strong capacity to negotiate and defend their rights and interests, and to meet their CFM responsibilities. However, CFM group capacity also varies considerably and, for most groups, is weak.

The commitment and capacity of responsible bodies

Generally, the most active groups are those that have received support and guidance, particularly from NGOs and NFA, while the less active groups are those that have not had such support. Improving the performance and reach of CFM will require more commitment and stronger capacity from responsible bodies. To date, NFA has demonstrated the strongest leadership role by far in supporting and expanding CFM, although it only has a one-person dedicated CFM unit with a very limited budget⁷.

In contrast, while local governments have an important role to play in CFM, in practice they have demonstrated little engagement beyond registering CFM Groups as CBOs and witnessing agreement signings. They have generally not demonstrated interest in developing CFM agreements for LFRs⁸ or in linking CFM groups to development programs. Many LFRs are degraded and can best be used for small plantation forestry, which is very suitable for adjacent communities wanting to benefit from CFM.

The prospects for CFM in privately held forests are less clear – in part because many privately held

natural forests are being rapidly converted for agriculture, and in part because the number of private forest owners with both long-term plans to retain forest on their land and a desire to collaborate with surrounding communities is understood to be very small.

The variability of NFA's engagement, and the relative lack of interest among other responsible bodies, remains a lost opportunity to expand CFM. NFA is unevenly engaged in CFM because its staff generally lack the technical capacity to support CFM and often do not see its value. A significant number of NFA staff are also sceptical of the merits and therefore the desirability of CFM. Eighty percent of NFA staff have never been trained in CFM. While they have copies of the national guidelines for implementing CFM and other key policy and legal documents, they do not have a sufficient understanding of their application. Similarly, other responsible bodies also have inadequate information and capacity to sufficiently support CFM.

CFM support also requires more human resources. NFA plans to hire nine additional CFM supervisors but has been unable to do so because

⁷ CFM is a component of NFA's performance contract with its parent Ministry of Water and Environment.

⁸ This is partly because LFRs are often situated in urban and peri-urban areas and access to them is

therefore contested or already earmarked, and partly because local district authorities simply do not have the staff or resources to facilitate CFM in LFRs.



Regular liaison meetings between NFA staff (as the responsible body) and CFM groups are key for ensuring successful forest co-management

of a government-imposed hiring freeze, although it could instead budget for and use its own non-tax revenue if it wished. The presence (and commitment) of these staff are critical to improving and expanding CFM's impact, as evidenced in the Lakeshore Range, where the presence of dedicated CFM supervisor has greatly expanded CFM. This was enabled in part by transfer / sharing of capacity between ranges, a model that would go some way, at least in the interim, to bridging capacity gaps.

CFM group capacity to meet responsibilities and defend rights

CFM group capacity is also critical to CFM's success. Groups need, *inter alia*, capacities in lobbying and advocacy, record keeping/financial management, conflict management, enterprise development and management and value addition and marketing, in addition to specific skills related to the activities to be implemented in their forest areas.

There are many examples of CFM groups making substantive contributions to forests and their members' livelihoods (see Boxes 5 and 7). These notwithstanding, the review found that many CFM groups lack the capacity or resources to effectively negotiate, implement and monitor their CFM agreements, or to defend their rights and interests. This includes the enterprise development, value addition and marketing and management skills needed to effectively pursue forest- and farm-based enterprise development. With a handful of exceptions, there has been very

limited capacity building support, particularly once CFM agreements have been signed.

Box 7: CFM groups can help transform local forest governance for the better

CFM groups have used a variety of strategies and platforms to defend and advance their interests and rights in good faith. While the opportunity and their capacity to defend their lawful interests in CFM varies, in a number of cases CFM groups have been able to question forestry staff and government leaders on illegal activities taking place, and to successfully advocate for effective remedial action. For example, as a result of advocacy efforts by the KIFECA, KASUFU and Kibego CFM groups (around Itwara and Kibego CFRs), the Kenjojo District Local Government has agreed to display the names of all licensed timber dealers and their respective areas of operation in order to help identify and apprehend illegal timber cutters. In another case, CFM group members reported a surveillance unit that had been appointed by the NFA Executive Director to monitor and stop illegal activities, and which had instead become involved in illegal resource use. The action of the CFM group ultimately resulted in the surveillance unit being disbanded. In some cases, this shift in accountability and transparency has helped improve relations between NFA and communities. In summary, CFM arrangements can open formal and informal spaces for communities to help improve forest governance, and CFM groups are increasingly (and more effectively) using these.

3.5 The Quality of Governance in CFM

Key Issues:

NFA has often not sufficiently followed through with its obligations / commitments to the CFM groups it has agreements with – from failing to deliver on forest-based benefits, to not sufficiently responding to reports of illegality and forest crime, to not providing sufficient guidance and support to groups to solve their internal governance challenges.

The underlying reasons for creating CFM groups sometimes depart from the original intention of CFM – with an increasing trend towards legitimising and rewarding forest encroachment, which is often times driven by local elites and politicians. CFM should not be used to reward forest encroachment and forest crime, nor to aid and abet local political agendas.

Accountability of CFM groups also varies. While some demonstrate high degrees of accountability, others struggle with implementing and following through on their CFM agreements, administering and governing their limited funds and avoiding conflicts of interest, especially by their leaders.

Ensuring the legitimacy of CFM groups (and the agreements they enter into) is important for maintaining the integrity of CFM and avoiding the potential for CFM groups succumbing or selling out to illicit interests peddling in forest land and resources grabbing.

Access to information and sufficient understanding of the purpose of CFM and the rights and responsibilities of all parties needs to be improved.

All of the issues explored in this document relate in some way to the broad topic of CFM governance. The review identified many strengths in current CFM governance, which should be built upon. However, it also identified several significant weaknesses.

Accessibility of information for CFM groups

CFM guidelines require that information be in formats understandable to all stakeholders including women, youth and other often marginalised people. NFA and NGOs have tried to provide information about CFM through different channels, such as meetings, forest related trainings, radio talk shows and routine field activities. In some cases, information has indeed been provided in transparent, proactive and inclusive ways, e.g., where the Batwa have been specifically included in CFM processes (supported by Nature Uganda). In some sites, however, communication methods and processes have

tended to favour wealthier and more powerful community members, and to exclude more marginalised groups. This has exacerbated concerns about elite capture of CFM benefits.

Safeguards for facilitating the negotiation of CFM agreements

NFA often directly drafts CFM agreements even though it is one of the two main parties in each agreement. In many cases, NFA carries out this dual role responsibly. Nonetheless, there is an inherent conflict of interest in this arrangement, and no clear guidelines or safeguards in place to address it. In many cases there are no impartial third parties readily available to help negotiate the CFM agreements. Therefore, clear guidelines are required on the information that NFA should share with prospective CFM groups and the criteria for determining where and how CFM groups can use forests. Similarly, when CFM groups run into internal governance issues, oftentimes NFA may be the only organisation that



CFM can help reduce unsustainable use practices – such as this honey harvesting in Lalak CFR, northern Uganda

can help CFM Groups resolve these issues. However, straightforward guiding principles and training for NFA staff are required for mediating these issues in an impartial and effective manner.

NFA does not always sufficiently consider the implications of its interactions and communications with forest-adjacent communities. Engagement with communities about CFM is often ad-hoc or conducted through meetings that were initially planned with a different agenda, in particular in response to (and intended to resolve) recurring challenges like forest encroachment and high levels of illegal forest activities. These meetings are usually not the right context for introducing CFM as a solution, because doing so can lead people to view CFM as a means for legitimising forest encroachment. This can also send a message to other communities and their leaders that they can encroach on CFRs and then be rewarded with a CFM arrangement for the forest land they have encroached upon.

The accountability of NFA in meeting its CFM agreement obligations

NFA sometimes demonstrates accountability, particularly NFA staff members who understand

and support work with CFM groups. However, often times NFA has not followed policy and/or not followed through on its responsibility to deliver payments or negotiated benefits, in some cases contributing to ‘elite capture’ of the benefits that CFM groups should have received. For example:

- Seedlings from some tree nurseries established to support community tree planting programmes have been allocated to wealthier and more powerful actors, including MPs, private planters and government institutions rather than CFM groups
- CFM members widely report that NFA has not followed through on its commitment to provide access to high-value forest resources such as timber and charcoal⁹
- In land allocations in 2017, NFA did not adhere to its policy to reserve 5% of the total forest land area for planting by local communities (ideally through CFM arrangements)¹⁰
- NFA payments to members of community patrols in CFRs often go unpaid or are paid late.

⁹ While fuel wood is a key resource, CFM groups do not value it as an additional benefit arising from CFM because they generally collected it from forests before establishing CFM agreements.

¹⁰ In CFRs designated for plantation development, it is NFA policy to reserve 5% of the total area to be

planted for local communities, who ideally can access it through CFM. The rest of the land is allocated to private investors to develop plantations. However, in land allocations done last year, most of the land in CFRs was allocated to

CFM group governance

As with NFA, the review found both positive examples (see Box 8) as well as challenges with regard to CFM group accountability and transparency. Many CFM groups do not take adequate steps (and do not have adequate capacity) to ensure that group members refrain from illegal activities in the forests they are responsible for monitoring. Some CFM groups have enabled local elites to gain access to CFR land by illegally selling them their interest in the land that they were allocated by NFA. Regarding accountable administration and governance of group resources, some CFM groups are struggling to prevent embezzlement of funds, and also membership fees often go unpaid.

In terms of transparency, many CFM groups lack a structured way to jointly plan and share information and learning with their members and wider community, including to pass on technical information received during trainings. Further, most CFM groups do not have copies of the key CFM guiding instruments and some do not have copies of their own agreements. This compromises the level of understanding of CFM groups and their compliance with their CFM agreements.

Most CFM groups are meeting with regularity, which is a strength. However, attendance is often low, making it difficult to ensure legitimate or

Box 8: CFM groups take proactive measures for transparency and accountability

Some CFM groups, such as Rwoho, NNTG, MANRUIA and KICODA, are governed with high levels of transparency and accountability, including as they jointly plan, make decisions and documents public and provide reports on meetings and financial transactions. These practices enhance the access to and flow of information.

appropriate representation when key decisions are made. Further, information and power are often concentrated within CFM group leadership, with the voice of the broader group being less visible or influential.

While substantial attention has been given in some cases to engaging women, youth and others in CFM processes, and women have some leadership roles, overall the level of inclusiveness needs to be improved so that CFM has a broader base of participation. Youth, in particular, have been far less involved, in part due to their lack of interest in the longer-term benefits that CFM generally offers (e.g., through tree planting).

The legitimacy of CFM groups

CFM groups must meet a number of criteria to be eligible to enter into agreements, as set out in the CFM guidelines and regulations. The high proportion of ‘informal’ CFM arrangements raises the risk that some may not be technically eligible for being formalised as CFM agreements, and over half of the CFM groups with signed agreements had not renewed their registration status as CBOs (as of the time of the review), technically making their agreements with NFA illegal and non-compliant. One broader, related concern is that, if safeguards and due diligence are not in place to ensure CFM groups are legitimate, the CFM process can be exploited by local elites or used by individuals to illegally access CFR land. Given the rate of deforestation, growing resource demands and increasing land shortages, this is an issue that will continue to require careful attention going forward.

Responsiveness of NFA to forest crime reporting by CFM groups

Patrolling and reporting on illegal activities is one of CFM groups’ primary responsibilities and contributions to forest conservation. In most cases, they do not have powers of arrest or the authority to impose sanctions on lawbreakers.

private investors without consideration of the local communities living adjacent CFRs.

They instead report illegal activities to NFA who then has the responsibility to take action. The review found that NFA has been inconsistent in its responsiveness to such reporting. While action is sometimes taken (see Box 7), NFA often does not

follow up, or does so only weakly and/or in a delayed manner. This substantially undermines the conservation contributions of CFM groups working to stop forest crime and demotivates them from carrying out patrols.

3.6 Roles of Facilitating and Supporting Organisations

Key Issues:

NGOs and development partners are playing critical financial and technical support roles in CFM expansion in Uganda. Bringing CFM to scale requires their continued and expanded engagement, as well as that of the private sector. However, the outsized role of NGOs also presents challenges, including when projects end without an exit or transition plan for the CFM groups they have supported. Facilitating and supporting roles must be well coordinated and contribute to (and not undermine) CFM sustainability. There needs to be a strong CFM coordination unit at NFA, and a much-improved approach to how CFM is supported and funded going forward by a diverse range of organisations.

NGOs have played a critical role in facilitating CFM processes and supporting their implementation, including by providing substantial financial (and to a somewhat lesser extent) technical support, often times as part of broader projects. Many signed CFM agreements were funded by NGOs, and nearly all of the CFM groups that have made substantial progress have been supported by NGOs and/or projects. Further, NGOs are often regarded by communities as impartial mediators in the negotiation of agreements between CFM groups and NFA and are generally found to be accountable to fulfilling their obligations related to CFM. Communities' access to information about CFM is generally higher in areas where CFM is supported by NGOs, including because community mobilisation and awareness creation are integral to many NGOs' approaches. In addition, NGOs have staff present in locations where NFA may not. This all points to the importance of NGO partnerships and contributions in complementing and building NFA's capacity.

Multi-lateral development partners have also played a key role in supporting CFM, including having supported at least 16 CFM groups in various CFRs as part of larger projects. They have

supported, *inter alia*, community mobilisation and awareness on forestry conservation and CFM, group formation and CFM processes up to the signing of agreements, training in conservation and livelihood improvement, study tours and exchange visits and provision of seed capital to

Box 9: NGOs have supported CFM in areas across Uganda

For example:

- **WWF** has supported five CFM groups around Kalinzu and Towa CFRs
- **Nature Uganda** has supported all of the CFM groups around Kasyoha-Kitoomi and Echuya CFRs
- **Care International** has been a key player in supporting several CFM arrangements in Matiri, Itwara, Mubuku and Kihaimira CFRs
- **Environmental Alert** and **IUCN** have jointly supported Katum CFM group in Agoro Agu CFR
- **Fauna and Flora International (FFI)** has supported several CFM groups in Kyotera district

CFM groups' village savings and credit associations.

Private sector involvement in and support for CFM has been very limited, but needs to grow substantially as part of establishing, improving and scaling up forest- and forest-edge sustainable enterprise as an increasingly important and central component of CFM.

While critical to CFM's success to date, the outsized role of these supporting and facilitating organisations, and of NGOs in particular, also pose challenges to CFM's sustainability and coherence. NGO-supported CFM activities are often linked to organisations' project designs and cycles. They are sometimes designed and implemented without the knowledge of and/or joint planning

with NFA and local governments and often without transition / exit plans. This can put CFM groups in the position of having to start or stop activities on timelines defined by the broader projects, and in some cases starting again with different approaches and objectives as new projects come along. NGO staff also often lack the technical capacity to facilitate CFM processes. They have frequently relied on NFA field staff, who too lack the competencies for long-term community engagement and mobilisation. **This all points towards the need for developing a strong CFM coordination unit and clearer and improved approaches / models for technical capacity building, funding and sustaining support for CFM and to CFM groups.**

3.7 Collaboration, Coordination and Network Building

Key Issues:

CFM will require more effective coordination and collaboration among facilitating and implementing partners. While there is some ad hoc collaboration, the lack of strong coordination, especially by NFA, contributes to variation in CFM's effectiveness and hinders learning across experiences.

Networks at national level, and even more so at the local level, have been important to CFM groups, and stand to be increasingly so, including in defending rights, co-developing forest-related economic enterprises and sharing information. However, these networks tend to be weak and need further support and formalisation, starting with grassroots efforts and, through them, growing a robust and sustainable national network.

Collaboration and coordination between CFM actors

Although CFM is a partnership between a responsible body and a CFM group, it often involves other actors at multiple levels (government, NGOs, development partners, private sector, etc.) and sometimes several sectors (forestry, agriculture, banking, market support, vocational education, etc.). Each actor has critical roles to play. Therefore, particularly as it is taken to scale, CFM will require better coordination and collaboration between communities, different parts of local and central government, the private sector, NGOs and development partners.

CFM coverage has expanded through formal and informal arrangements, supported by parties and projects of varying intensity, scope and strategy. This has enabled opportunistic, sometimes innovative and organic growth but has made coordination more challenging. The absence of overarching coordination mechanisms has contributed to a general lack of cohesion amongst organisations engaged in and supporting CFM at a landscape level. This, in turn, contributes to variation in CFM effectiveness and missed opportunities to learn across experiences and link with opportunities in other sectors. A lack of regular opportunities for CFM groups to engage formally with NFA and other actors also weakens

Box 10: CFM groups are forming grassroots networks and alliances and engaging in multi-stakeholder initiatives

While overall coordination remains weak, some CFM groups are forming networks and alliances amongst themselves. For example, within the Eco-Tourism Association (ECOTA) in Echuya, four CFM groups share information and lobby for an enabling environment and have recently been exploring the possibility of developing eco-tourism, having received a concession from NFA for that purpose. Rwoho CFMs have agreed to cooperate and share information through their unique opportunity to partner with NFA under the Nile Afforestation Project funded through the World Bank's Bio-carbon Fund. Five CFM groups in Mpanga Sector are forming a multi-purpose cooperative, Mpanga CFM Cooperative, to advance their business interests. Similarly, the eleven CFM groups which do not yet have signed agreements in Gomba CFR are forming Mpenja Environmental Management Association (MEMA) to promote cooperation in the landscape. The CFM groups around Kalinzu have formed the Kalinzu Landscape Forum for information sharing and promotion of joint marketing of products from their enterprises, such as honey. Some groups are also engaging in the emerging National Forest Stewardship Standards (NFSS) - a multi-stakeholder initiative across government, the private sector, NGOs, academia and communities to establish and implement forest management standards, supported by the Forest Stewardship Council and aligned with their global standards.

CFM groups' ability to lobby and advocate for their rights and the support they need.

CFM group networks

Some CFM groups have begun mobilising amongst themselves to form grassroots networks and strategic alliances (see Box 10).

These efforts are contributing to their capacity, coordination and effectiveness, including when they meet and plan together to share experiences. CFM groups also build solidarity with one another through networks and joint actions, e.g., when defending members' rights, developing collaborative business partnerships and improving and sharing their access to information. Further, CFM networks help groups learn from each other and establish working relations, standards (e.g., as part of the emergent National Forest Stewardship Standards) and by-laws to address interests and problems across their jurisdictions. Networked groups are also starting to command higher levels of visibility, credibility and legitimacy with their respective local governments, but need to be much further strengthened.

While these growing networking initiatives are important, generally speaking, spaces for coordinating and engaging on CFM remain weak (and non-existent in some regions of Uganda). At the national level, the Uganda Network of Collaborative Forest Associations (UNETCOFA) was formed in September 2006 for and by Community Based Organisations (CBOs) participating in CFM. The formation was a strategy to 'join the dots' of various CBOs implementing, negotiating or intending to start CFM process, to enhance joint learning and information sharing and to form a critical mass for lobbying and advocating for policies in relation to CFM that address the forest management and livelihood interests of forest-adjacent and forest-dependent communities. However, since the closure of the Empowering Communities for Forest Management (EMPAFORM) project in 2009 (under which UNETCOFA was originally formed), it is apparent that for various reasons, especially a lack of sustained and sufficient institutional

support¹¹, **UNETCOFA has not been active as a space through which CFM groups can engage at national level.**

Amplifying the voices of CFM groups in support of improved forest governance will require

supporting emerging networks and strengthening existing ones. In the current landscape, it may be more effective to focus first on strengthening promising, organically developed grassroots networks and then build from these to a national institution like UNETCOFA.

3.8 Conflict Resolution

Key Issues:

As CFM expands, some related conflicts are arising. There are formal mechanisms for conflict resolution between CFM groups and responsible bodies. However, CFM groups are often unaware of, or otherwise unable to access, these and many conflicts go unresolved.

While there are no set mechanisms for resolving conflicts within CFM groups, some groups have had success using disciplinary committees and mediation. Support for innovative solutions like these will continue to be important for CFM groups.

As CFM grows, some related conflicts are arising (or being exacerbated). Some relate to the scope, delivery and sharing of benefits (discussed in the earlier section on benefits). Others relate to broader issues in the landscape, e.g., land rights disputes or changes in places where CFM is being implemented. It will be imperative to have effective, accessible and equitable ways to address these conflicts as CFM continues, with a strong element of adaptive learning and learning by doing.

The CFM guidelines provide a mechanism for resolving disputes between parties to a CFM agreement. However, CFM group members often lack the information and capacity needed to access this formal mechanism, including in relation to conflicts with NFA, and ensuring communities have this information is not part of the typical CFM process. Further, while NFA has its own legal counsel to explain the breach of contract, community groups lack such legal

support. CFM groups can seek pro-bono services if and as they are accessible, but several groups have abandoned their complaints and cases due to the long time it was taking to reach an agreeable solution (often with NFA). There are glaring cases where NFA has been in breach of a CFM agreement, but the CFM groups concerned have remained unable to secure redress. When disputes go unresolved, CFM groups sometimes withdraw their support. For example, the NACOB group (Mabira CFR) raised concerns about not receiving any benefit from trees being harvested by licensed individuals in forest areas protected by their CFM group. As a result, members have now largely withdrawn their efforts in protecting the CFR and have instead focused on carrying out CFR-type activities on their own land. Finally, the many CFM groups which do not have valid agreements, whatever the reason, make formal dispute resolution more challenging.

¹¹ In contrast, in Tanzania, MJUMITA (the equivalent of UNETCOFA) which had similar origins, has been primarily and capably supported for a decade by the Tanzania Forest Conservation Group,

and has made far greater progress in developing as an effective and active national community forestry network.

3.9 Monitoring and Learning

Key Issues:

Monitoring will be key to the sustainability and scaling of CFM, including identifying both ecological and socio-economic impacts, sharing experiences within and across CFM contexts and informing policy and practice changes. This is an area where significant additional action is required.

Currently, information about CFM impacts and lessons is scattered, unstructured and rarely consolidated to feed into policy and improvements in practice. NFA has not yet developed a systematic approach to monitoring CFM groups or reporting on their performance. Likewise, CFM groups are often unable to adequately document and share information within their group members, or with NFA, including due to financial and capacity constraints. Some NGOs are monitoring aspects of CFM; however, this information is not systematically shared with NFA, and there is no structure for synthesizing information from across sites.

As CFM is scaled up, more robust, consistent and sustainable monitoring mechanisms will need to be put in place, including to identify impacts, share experiences within and across sites, and

inform policy and practice changes. While NFA has overall responsibility, monitoring processes and methods should enable the coordination and inputs of all CFM stakeholders, especially CFM groups. There have been innovative community-based forest communication and monitoring initiatives that could be taken up in CFM and coordinated through an over-arching forest information and management system. For example, the Forest Community Based Monitoring (FCBM) platform in the forest sector was implemented by the Anti-Corruption Coalition Uganda with JESE (Joint Efforts to Save the Environment) to curb corruption and illegal activities. Unfortunately funding for this initiative ended. The Jane Goodall Institute has been piloting the use of Forest Global Watch (<https://www.globalforestwatch.org>) data with communities.

3.10 The Broader Enabling Environment for CFM

Key Issues:

CFM strengths and challenges are shaped in part by broader policy and practice issues in the forest and other sectors. These will need to be taken into account as CFM is scaled up.

CFM's potential to support sustainable forest management and livelihoods is shaped by a number of enabling conditions within the CFM system itself (e.g., the governance and capacity issues previously discussed) and in the broader contexts in which it is implemented. The review identified the following considerations in the broader environment as being particularly important:

Strong legal and policy guidance: Currently, there is a strong legal basis for CFM, including under NFTP (2003) and supplemental guidance. This should be maintained into the future. However, policies inevitably change over time. The planned policy review process may have implications for CFM, and it is envisaged that the CFM Review (and this summary) will be a useful resource for this process.



Several CFRs which are co-managed by CFM groups are home to Chimpanzee (*Pan troglodytes*) communities such as here in Kalinzu

Completed and supportive forest management plans and by-laws: CFM agreements must comply with CFR management plans and therefore technically cannot be finalised until those plans are in place. As of May 2019, only 46% of CFRs had a management plan in place.¹² NFA has recognised the need to increase the pace of management plan development, including in ways that enable CFM. Likewise, straightforward management plans are still needed for many LFRs, and local governments also lack (or do not enforce) bylaws that could further enable CFM, e.g. by controlling forest fires.

Clear and secure derivative forestland tenure arrangements: Establishing mutually agreed access rights in CFRs, LFRs and private reserves is contingent in part on having clear and secure derivative forest land tenure and access rights. **To be clear, radical title to CFR and LFR land should remain with the government held on behalf of the nation¹³, but when derivative forest management rights are allocated to third parties, these should be clear and generally secure for the duration of the agreement, conditional on the derivative right holder fulfilling their agreed**

obligations. Wherever appropriate, local communities (i.e. CFM groups) and local associations should be given preferential tenure rights based on considerations of merit and equitability. Broader disputes about forestland tenure have raised doubts among local communities about the security of their rights and their participation in CFM. This is exemplified by the frequently negative press coverage on the occurrence of illegality, encroachment, acquisition of illegal land titles and historical claims to land ownership in CFRs and LFRs, particularly involving some cultural institutions (kingdoms) and the powerful and rich. Communities should be protected from the competing claims of these third parties. Further, as tenure rights change, CFM governance may face new challenges that will have to be addressed, e.g. ensuring that appropriate accommodation is made between CFR boundaries, current CFM agreements and emerging customary land titles as their recognition expands in the north-east of the country.

¹² Unpublished NFA data.

¹³ And in the case of forests on private land (mailo, freehold or customary), ownership should remain with the owner(s).

4 Road Map for Enabling Sustainable CFM at Scale

The following is a proposed road map for enabling effective, equitable and sustainable CFM at scale in Uganda. Recommended actions aim to build on the strengths and address the challenges described in the previous section.

These recommendations would be most effectively implemented through the support of a dedicated three- to five-year project due to the

nature of the technical, coordinating and convening competencies required.

Many of these recommendations are addressed to NFA because it is taking a lead in CFM. However, much of the content of these recommendations could as much apply to local governments or private forest owners were they to take a more proactive role in CFM.

Recommendations

1. NFA should finalise all unsigned CFM agreements, review and appropriately renew expired CFM agreements, and support CFM groups to develop realistic development plans

1.1 NFA should streamline and regularise the CFM agreement process

1. Finalise all existing CFM applications and draft CFM agreements
2. Ensure that CFM applications and agreements generally take no more than one year from initiation to signing
3. Review and renew expired CFM agreements

1.2 NFA should develop and promote a progressive / phased approach to CFM group development and planning

1. Develop a progressive or phased approach to CFM group development and planning (together with supporting organisations) – for each group identify:
 - a. Long-term goals that cover the duration of agreements
 - b. Short-term practical objectives and milestones that are achievable, can be incrementally built upon in phases and lead towards each group's goals
2. Ensure that the (development) plans of CFM groups:
 - a. Take into account activity costs, the realistic benefit potential of the site and CFM group capacity
 - b. Are adaptable
 - c. Enable joint monitoring
 - d. Address issues of inclusiveness, including for women and youth

2. Achieve sufficient, coordinated, and strategically diversified CFM financing

2.1 Develop a coordinated approach and broader outlook on CFM financing opportunities and arrangements:

1. Identify existing and relevant sources of financing through reaching out and engaging with the managers of these resources and clarify how CFM groups and supporting organisations can appropriately access these funds

2. Provide CFM groups helpful information about funding sources (including opportunities, limitations and risks) and provide ongoing technical support and training (e.g., proposal writing and reporting) to enable access to these resources
3. Assess and address constraints / barriers to the ability of CFM groups and supporting organisations to access these financing sources (e.g., support for proposal writing, reporting, networking, capacity building etc.)

2.2 Enable and promote CFM groups' access to relevant government expenditures and initiatives:

1. NFA should allocate financial resources sufficient for an operationally functional CFM technical unit that is able to provide effective support to NFA ranges and CFM groups
2. Make the case for CFM to more consistently and substantially benefit from relevant sector expenditure and other relevant funding sources (such as those linked to hydropower generation, irrigation, rural water supply, etc.) from MWE, NFA and local government budgets and initiatives.
3. Pro-actively engage in other sectors' planning and budgeting, sharing evidence on linkages between community forestry and other sectors (e.g. agriculture, tourism, power generation, adaptation to climate change, health, etc.)

2.3 Develop new sources and approaches for financing CFM – targeting the institutional development of CFM groups and networks as well as the growth of sustainable forest- and forest-edge enterprises

1. Identify emerging partners and opportunities for additional financing for CFM as part of developing an effective CFM financing system that is also orientated towards leveraging increasing private sector investment
2. Support the establishment of diverse financing mechanisms for CFM that are appropriate / viable for specific contexts - including revolving funds among CFM groups, using seed capital from grants. For example:
 - a. Revive release of forestry conditional grants to local governments, with guidelines to support CFM groups
 - b. Increase CFM budget allocation by 100%
 - c. As much as possible, fund CFM through the budgets to NFA's ranges
 - d. Allocate at least 25% of the Community Tree Planting Programme to CFM groups to raise seedlings
 - e. Coordinate implementation of existing and new projects to include CFM groups and broaden participation at a landscape rather than site level

3. Generate greater, more diversified and more equitably distributed opportunities and benefits for CFM groups

3.1 NFA should develop and implement clear benefit sharing guidelines for CFM for both monetary and non-monetary forest benefits, including revenue sharing, together with principles for how benefits can be equitably shared within CFM groups

1. Clarify and standardise revenue and other benefit sharing arrangements between NFA and CFM groups and integrate these in NFA's operational policies, including regarding access to economic opportunities within CFRs. This guidance should be specific about the sources of benefits and sharable revenue, the qualifying criteria and procedures, and the formulae/principles governing their distribution – in line with the Public Finance Management Act (2015). These arrangements should be developed in consultation with CFM groups and other (NGO) stakeholders.

2. Develop and support the implementation of guidelines / best practices for equitable benefit sharing within CFM groups through consulting CFM groups and other (NGO) stakeholders.
3. The benefit sharing guidelines should embody the objective of achieving a basket of both shorter- and longer- term benefits for CFM groups that meet their varying local expectations and exceed their perceived costs of forest stewardship. In addition, the guidelines should set out principles for emerging sources of revenue, such as payments for ecosystem services, as well as how women, youth and other marginalised people can participate in and benefit from forest-related economic opportunities.

3.2 Support the development of forest and forest-edge enterprises and market linkages with CFM groups, especially through promoting the engagement of the private sector

1. Support CFM groups (especially those with a business, cooperative and/or association) to build forest and forest-edge enterprise models. Prioritise those with likely economies of scale in production, marketing and value addition for support through working with private sector support partners
2. Develop guidelines for investor relationships with CFM groups, including guidance for managing monetary and non-monetary benefits with CFM groups

4. Strengthen the capacity and engagement of responsible bodies (NFA)

4.1 NFA must play a strong, proactive role in planning, managing and promoting CFM, including with local and other government partners

1. NFA should assume strong ownership of planning, managing and promoting CFM, including working closely with local governments through formalised partnerships, as they have a greater presence on the ground and play an important role in mobilising communities and resolving their conflicts
2. NFA should improve the attitudes and understanding of CFM within its own staff, as well as with local and other government stakeholders

4.2 NFA should allocate a viable level of staff resources to support and promote CFM

1. Specifically give (new and existing) staff across ranges key responsibilities for CFM
2. Expedite recruitment of up to nine additional CFM supervisors at range level as soon as government lifts its payroll restrictions or NFA can afford to pay them from its own resources
3. Ensure all staff have the resources and logistical support needed to fulfil their duties related to CFM

5. Better coordinate the activities of CFM-support organisations and improve their level of accountability and transparency

5.1 NFA should establish an overarching multi-stakeholder CFM coordination committee and provide guidance on the roles, responsibilities and coordination of CFM stakeholders

1. The CFM coordination committee should act as an information sharing, learning and coordination forum, with clear terms of reference and with membership drawn from civil society, the private sector and technical experts
2. NFA should require that it is consulted on and aware of partner plans, projects and fund-raising efforts with CFM groups, including any proposed transfers of CFM rights / benefits (see also Section 5.2)

3. As a related or sub-group, a CFM funders' platform should be established to enable CFM funders to coordinate and share experiences, lessons and strategies
4. As part of improved coordination, NFA should develop and implement guidance on the roles, responsibilities, procedures and obligations for key CFM actors (civil society, private sector, projects, etc.), including how activities are to be coordinated at Range/CFR level and communicated to NFA

5.2 NFA should require that partners supporting CFM groups have Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs) with NFA, share all relevant project documentation and reporting and have coordinated and effective exit strategies / transitions

1. Establish and enforce MoUs between supporting / facilitating organisations and NFA. MoUs should define, inter alia, the CFRs and the CFM sites that will be supported, the period for which the support will last and the roles and responsibilities of key parties to the MoU. Copies of the MoU should be given to NFA staff operating in the selected CFM sites, as well as CFM groups.
2. Identify and involve all key stakeholders from the outset, including from community, LG and NFA, including field staff
3. Require that supporting organisations comply with a coordinated and agreed approach to CFM, and that, additionally, they are able to provide competencies that complement core CFM support needs, especially related to mediation, enterprise development and the progressive promotion of forest standards
4. Ensure that partners share all project documents and ongoing work plans, budgets and reports for activities to be implemented at CFM sites including with NFA field staff
5. Require that supporting partners meet regularly with NFA (HQ and/or range staff) to assess progress and challenges
6. Develop and share a written 'end of project / support' exit strategy

6. Improve the capacity and effectiveness of CFM groups and the level of support provided to them

6.1 NFA should ensure that CFM groups have impartial support for negotiating CFM agreements

1. As much as possible, arrange access to negotiation / facilitation support from neutral organisations for mediating CFM agreements and avoid politicisation of the process
2. Ensure that CFM group members have access to adequate information about the terms of their agreement and its options, including a realistic understanding of the potential benefits and costs/ risks

6.2 NFA should ensure that CFM groups are provided with adequate ongoing support and guidance in implementing their CFM agreements

1. Field staff should have regular contact and engagement with CFM groups, providing guidance and support to them
2. Carry out straightforward capacity assessments to enable each CFM group to receive targeted support that fits their development status and priorities, as well as to ensure that groups can, over time, comply with appropriate standards for leadership succession, group inclusivity and work planning, implementation and reporting
3. Develop straightforward training plans, including core topics (e.g. group management, book-keeping skills, reporting, key forestry / forest management skills, etc.) for each CFM group, based on their CFM agreement and work plans

4. NFA should work to identify and solicit assistance from NGOs and the private sector in providing support to CFM groups in areas in which it does not have adequate competency, such as enterprise and value chain development

7.1 NFA should ensure that it is delivering on the spirit and commitments it has made in existing CFM agreements

1. NFA should identify and carry out the steps necessary for ensuring it is making strong progress with delivering on the commitments it has made to CFM

7.2 CFM groups should provide regular reports to NFA about their status, progress and activities

1. CFM groups – with the support of NFA and partners – should write short, regular (e.g., quarterly) reports to NFA and their partners (e.g., using a straightforward template or form provided by NFA) on key monitoring issues (e.g., their activities and achievements in relation to their work plans and objectives, in line with their CFM agreement)
2. NFA should require annual updates (and, where necessary, documentation) regarding each CFM group's institutional development (e.g., leadership elections, membership, partners / supporters, funding, turnover, CBO compliance status, etc.)

7.3 NFA should improve the availability of information provided to CFM groups

1. NFA (supported by its partners) should ensure that all CFM groups have access to easily understood CFM-relevant resource materials (e.g., guides to the forestry laws, regulations, CFM guidelines, etc.) as well as share arising information in regard to the management of CFRs, law enforcement support, economic opportunities, etc.
2. Review and improve the CFM guidelines to underpin these recommendations

8. Promote the development of CFM networks for better CFM capacity, information sharing and forest governance

8.1 Support strengthening of grassroots CFM networks / platforms

1. Ugandan civil society should better and more effectively support the development of grassroots CFM and forestry-related networks (including, as feasible, UNETCOFA) to enable CFM groups to share experiences, defend their rights and amplify the visibility and voices of CFM groups in relation to forest governance and management issues
2. Ugandan civil society should work to provide accessible legal representation to CFM groups and networks – to strengthen their rights and access to the law

9. Enhance monitoring of CFM for assessment and learning

9.1 NFA, together with its partners, should develop and implement a straightforward and effective monitoring and learning framework for CFM

1. Identify clear indicators against which to evaluate CFM performance (in consultation with supporting partners)
2. Develop a well-structured, participatory assessment method and system / template for recording results
3. Ensure monitoring and learning tools are accessible to stakeholders who will use them, including CFM groups

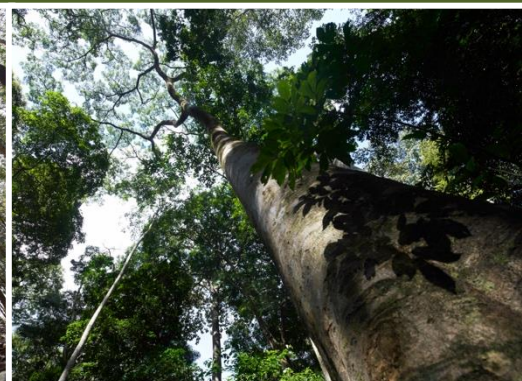
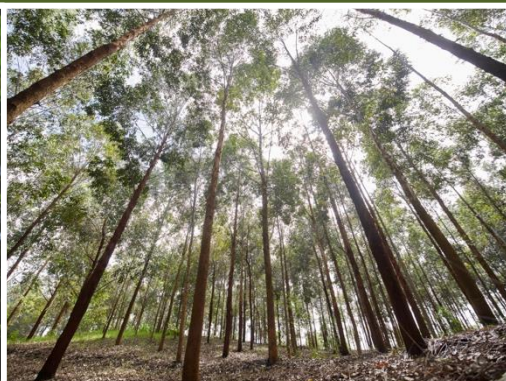
4. Establish a regularly update CFM database at National and Range levels and a process for collecting and entering data from across CFM sites, linked to a robust but user-friendly Management Information System that helps NFA and its partners to track the implementation and performance of CFM
5. Carry out a knowledge, attitudes and practices survey on CFM at regular intervals (for example, once every 3-5 years) to gauge the state of CFM in the country

10. Strengthen the CFM enabling environment

10.1 NFA should ensure the management status of CFRs enables CFM to be implemented as designed

1. Expedite the finalisation of management plans for priority CFRs and LFRs (including zoning for where CFM can and cannot take place), using participatory methods, as part of enabling CFM agreement finalisation and implementation
2. When developing range/sector plans, liaise with CFM groups and local governments, so that CFM can be appropriately integrated across plans, ensuring alignment with national priorities and policies as well as local level needs
3. Confirm CFR and LFR boundaries to mitigate encroachment and conflict
4. Develop and enforce by-laws to support CFM (e.g., enhancing fire management)

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