

Adaptive Collaborative Management in Forest Landscapes

Villagers, Bureaucrats and Civil Society

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5 Strengthening women's tenure rights and participation in community forestry in central Uganda¹

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Introduction

Global approaches to forest management have, in the past 25 years, shifted from state-centric management to co-management, to sometimes devolving authority to whole communities (Belcher and Schreckenberg 2007). Despite this, evidence shows that in these devolution processes, women continue to be marginalized from decision making and in the distribution of tree or forest resource benefits (Mai, Mwangi and Wan 2011), while Arora-Jonsson et al. (2020) suggest that gender equality is a precondition for sustainable forestry management. In many countries, women's roles and representation in decision making in the forestry sector are very limited (FAO 2005). There are important differences between men's and women's perspectives on – and use of – forest resources for the wellbeing of their families and communities (IUCN 2011). In all regions of the world, women and men have different access to, control over and use of trees and land (IUCN 2011; FAO 2003). Unlike men who are largely involved in the extraction of timber products, women use products such as firewood and non-timber forest products, which may demand more frequent interaction with forests (Pandolfelli, Meinzen-Dick and Dohrn 2007; Mwangi, Meinzen-Dick and Sun 2011). Moreover, the ownership of forests and the sale of forest products are largely under the control of men, and women's needs and concerns over forests are often neglected (Women's Environment and Development Organization 2012).

A growing body of evidence demonstrates that women's involvement in forest management produces substantial gains for forest conservation and livelihoods (Agarwal 2010). The World Bank forestry strategy clearly states that sustainable use of forests requires the participation of all groups in rural communities, including women. It also states that women's needs differ from those of men, and many policies and programmes continue to overlook women's specific needs, knowledge, roles and relations regarding forest and tree resources (World Bank 2002).

Studies to understand the extent to which gender was addressed in Uganda's natural resources sector found important progress in formal gender mainstreaming but weak implementation at all levels of governance, from national to sub-national levels (Mukasa et al. 2012; Banana et al. 2012). These studies revealed that although the Uganda Forestry Policy, Forestry Act and Forestry Plan address gender and women's specific needs, they are not backed up by relevant regulation and mechanisms for monitoring implementation and ensuring compliance (Mukasa et al. 2012). In addition, existing customary rules in Uganda undermine women's participation in resource governance and limit their rights, benefits and participation in forests and tree resources decision making. Further, benefits from forests and tree resources continue to be allocated disproportionately, with men benefitting from the trade in high-value products while women's gains are from their subsistence use of resources or trade in low-value products. Because of cultural norms, women continue to access forest and tree resources through their relationships to their male counterparts as wives, daughters or sisters; any form of control or ownership is reserved to men. This puts women in vulnerable positions when divorced or widowed.

Here, we present the findings of a six-year process of negotiation and facilitation among mixed groups of men and women. The purpose of the process was to (a) explore how women's rights and access to forest and tree resources (on-farm tree resources, private forests, local and central government forest reserves) could be strengthened and (b) investigate the impact of the adaptive collaborative management (ACM) approach on gender equity in rights, decision making and benefits sharing in forest management activities. We highlight the governance arrangements, practices and processes that are central to enhancing gender inclusion and to the transformation of underlying values and norms in community forestry.

The next section provides the background to the ACM approach that was applied in this study. The third section presents the context and describes socio-economic conditions, and local land and tree/forestry tenure systems. Next, we describe the methods and materials used for the study. The fifth section presents and discusses our findings, and the sixth presents challenges and lessons learned from the study, followed by our conclusions.

Gender and collaborative resource governance: An overview

According to several scholars (McDougall et al. 2010; Mutimukuru-Maravanyika et al. 2017), the participation of women and other marginalized groups in resource (e.g., forest) management can be enhanced by using an ACM approach. ACM is a management approach that has gained popularity due to its equitable and sustainable outcomes in forest management situations (Colfer 2005a, b; Diaw, Aseh and Prabhu 2009; Mandondo, Prabhu and Matose 2008). The ACM approach is designed to enhance participation by all stakeholders (especially marginalized groups) in deliberate community efforts including decision making and benefit sharing.

By facilitating negotiations between stakeholders, practitioners may support the development of collaborative and adaptive strategies to manage forests (FAO 2006). For example in the ACM process, factors that hinder women's participation are identified and addressed, using participatory action research (PAR), a 'learning by doing' process through which a group, together with other stakeholders, identifies a problem, takes action to resolve it, monitors and evaluates the outcomes, reflects and learns from the activity (Figure 5.1) (Colfer 2005b; German et al. 2012; Mandondo, Prabhu and Matose 2008; Mutimukuru-Maravanyika et al. 2008).

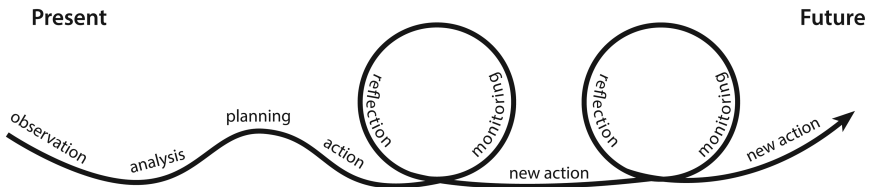


Figure 5.1 Participatory action research process.

The ACM approach seeks to empower women and other marginalized groups who live in and around forests by giving them a greater say in how forests are managed (CIFOR 2004). The approach has proven successful in encouraging both men and women to participate in managing their natural resources. For example, in Mafungautsi Forest Reserve, in Zimbabwe, women were not initially involved in formal forest management, as this was deemed a man's sphere. After representatives (both men and women) from the communities were invited to participate in capacity development activities (including a "training for transformation" workshop), women's attendance and participation in formal meetings rose dramatically and they became actively involved in various forest user groups (e.g., broom grass resource user groups; Mandondo, Prabhu and Matose 2008). Further, these women adopted sustainable harvesting techniques and began to generate more income through value addition (Mutimukuru-Maravanyika 2010; Mutimukuru-Maravanyika et al. 2008). Similar results have been found in Nepal, where lower caste women gained sufficient confidence after participation in ACM processes (Dangol 2005), and in Ghana, where women in the artisanal fisheries sector gained confidence and actively participated in resource management platforms after their capacities were developed through ACM processes (Mutimukuru-Maravanyika et al. 2017).

The implementation of ACM may however confront significant challenges. For example, ACM can create dependency, especially among disadvantaged groups who may require continued facilitation (Gondo 2011). And if care is not taken, the elites in the group may tend to influence decision making to support their own interests. On the other hand, the elites may stop participating in resource management platforms when they realize that the poor and marginalized are gaining more confidence and power (Mutimukuru-Maravanyika

2010). Similarly, external actors, such as government and NGOs, can advance their own interests at the expense of intended beneficiaries (Gondo 2011). Successful ACM implementation thus requires commitment from all stakeholders in terms of time, financial resources and genuine support of community objectives (Gondo 2011; Plummer and Armitage 2007).

The study area

Our study was conducted in Mpigi, Butambala, Masaka and Rakai Districts, which are all in the Lake Victoria agro-ecological zone of Uganda (Figure 5.2).

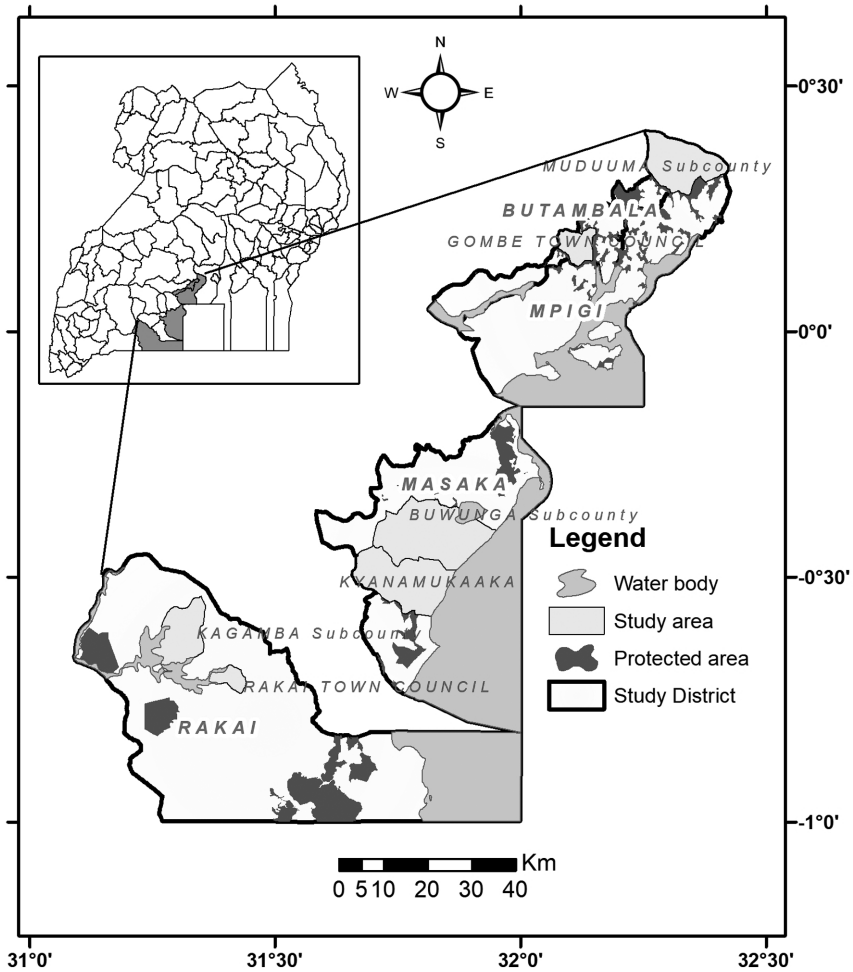


Figure 5.2 Lake Victoria Crescent covering the initial study districts of Mpigi, Masaka and Rakai.

Although generally equatorial, the climate is modified by the altitude with an average of between 1500 mm and 1800 mm of rainfall, per year and temperatures ranging from 21°C to 29°C (Banana et al. 2010). The average elevation of the study area is 1200 m above sea level. The vegetation of the region used to be tropical moist forests – however, most of this has been cleared for farming. The four districts have a total population of 1,164,701, with an average of 291,175 inhabitants each. Population densities range from 144.5 to 192.2 people per km² (Uganda Bureau of Statistics 2017). The study sites are dominated by the Baganda – the largest ethnic group in Uganda. This group is characterized by patriarchal values, with men as heads of household and main decision makers in the household and community. These norms and values have impacts on how tree and forest resources are utilized in the communities.² According to local cultural norms, a woman cannot own land, and therefore trees, through inheritance, but can access and manage land and trees through her male relatives (e.g., father, brother or husband).³ However, these norms are gradually changing due to supportive policies and continuous sensitization mostly by NGOs and other institutions focusing on gender issues, allowing some women (whether married, widowed or single) to inherit and own land and trees. Lately, women are increasingly attaining education and gaining economic empowerment, thus increasing their ability to purchase and own land. It should be noted that women own from 7% to 20% of land in Uganda (Lewis 2012; Mukasa et al. 2012).

Most people in the study sites grow a mix of crops, which include bananas, coffee, maize, beans, vegetables, trees and fodder grasses in agroforestry systems. Due to land pressure, encroachment on forest land for agricultural production is common and frequent, mostly by local community members living in areas adjacent to the forest reserves (Namaalwa, Gombya-Ssembajjwe and Hofstad 2001; Banana et al. 2012).

Several property-rights regimes exist in the study area including: central forest reserves (CFR) managed by the National Forest Authority (NFA), local forest reserves managed by district local governments, and private and communal forests on privately owned land. Past and current studies have found degradation of forestry resources to occur in all property-rights regimes (Banana and Gombya Ssembajjwe 2000). Tree tenure regimes also follow the forest property regimes whereby the government owns the trees in CFRs while trees on local forest reserves and private forests are owned by the local government and landlords, respectively.

Methodology

We used a mixed methods approach comprising both qualitative and quantitative methods. Following the participatory action research approach, qualitative methods included resource mapping, problem identification and problem tree analysis, pairwise ranking to prioritize problems, visioning that resulted in action planning (actions were then implemented to see what worked best),

focus group discussions, transect walks, key informant interviews and participant observation. In order to obtain the most recent information about the groups, phone calls to contact persons were used. Quantitative methods included surveys conducted using questionnaires (see Chapter 4).

The study area consisted of six selected project sites located in the four districts (Table 5.1) that were selected to vary by property regimes, distance to markets/main capital city (Kampala) and interaction with external actors. Further details of the site selection criteria can be found in (Banana et al. 2012).

Table 5.1 Selected study sites (see also Table 4.1)

<i>District</i>	<i>Sub-county</i>	<i>Site</i>	<i>Neighbouring forest reserve</i>
Butambala	Gombe T/C	Nkinga village	Nawandigi Central Forest Reserve (CFR)
Mpigi	Muduuma	Mbazzi village	Lwamunda CFR
Masaka	Buwunga	Bukeeri village	Nabukonge CFR and Catholic Mission Forest
Masaka	Kyanamukaka	Kagologolo village	Mujuzi CFR
Rakai	Rakai T/C	Kajoki village	No forest
Rakai	Kagamba	Kizira village	No forest

The adaptive collaborative management approach was used by a team of researchers, dubbed the ACM team,⁴ to implement community-selected, forest-related activities in the study sites and to facilitate gender inclusion within the context of these activities.

ACM is an approach whereby people who have interests in a natural resource agree to act together to plan, observe and learn from the implementation of their plans while recognizing that plans often fail to achieve their stated objectives. It is characterized by conscious efforts among such groups to communicate, collaborate, negotiate, resolve conflicts and seek out opportunities to learn collectively about the impacts of their actions.

(CIFOR 2008)

A key element of the ACM approach is participatory action research – a process of systematic inquiry that is collective, collaborative, self-reflexive and undertaken by participants seeking to answer questions about real-life concerns to improve their wellbeing. “Learning by doing” is the mode of operation in the PAR process whereby a group identifies a problem, takes action to resolve it, monitors the outcomes, reflects and learns from the activity – the community in this case is also actively involved in the research process. The iterative nature of this approach is illustrated in Figure 5.1. The process is driven by a

need to move from an undesired current situation to a desired future state that the actors agree upon, and the end goal of PAR is to empower the community to create change and deal with their own challenges rather than waiting passively for outside help (Apgar and Douthwaite 2013; Evans et al. 2014).

The ACM process was implemented in two phases and activities implemented in each phase are described separately below.

First phase (May 2011 to June 2013)

The process began with an analysis of Uganda's natural resources policies to understand how gender issues were being addressed there as well as what had worked and what had not worked (Banana et al. 2012). We also analysed the extent to which gender issues were considered in government and non-government forestry projects and programmes (Mukasa et al. 2012). A baseline survey with a larger group of communities was carried out. We then selected a subset of communities for the ACM work. The follow-up survey was then conducted in both ACM and non-ACM sites after the implementation of ACM to look for changes in the participation of women in forestry management over time. The results of this survey were reported in detail in Chapter 4.

The baseline surveys were followed by the training of trainers in the ACM approach. Several stakeholders participated in this training including government officials, researchers, NGO staff and staff from the private sector. During the training, the art of facilitation and PAR, among other issues, were demystified. The ACM team later established contact with district and community officials in order to identify, build and strengthen partnerships. This was followed by community entry and mobilization and implementation of ACM activities facilitated by two female external facilitators⁵ (from the Association of Uganda Professional Women in Agriculture and Environment).

At the beginning of the PAR cycle, with facilitation of the district-level stakeholders (who participated in the ACM capacity development workshop; see Chapter 6 for similar examples), the community members (both men and women) were involved in a visioning exercise. Using knowledge of their current situation, including identifying opportunities and problems in their communities, they generated their desired visions and later developed action plans for implementation. Visioning exercises resulted in five-year community action plans that were specific for each user group. All activities were conducted through segregated gender groups of elderly men and women, adult men and women, young men (aged 15–19) and women. The younger married women refused to be grouped under female youth as they felt their needs were similar to those of the older women. Presentations and discussions were done in plenary sessions to reach a common agreement. Across the four districts, a total of 222 (113 men and 109 women) community members voluntarily participated in the visioning exercises (Table 5.2). During the exercise, male youth were separated from adult men because of their different interests. Attendance per community (both youth and adults combined) is illustrated in Table 5.2.

Table 5.2 Attendance per community

No	District	Village/community	Number of participants		
			Men	Women	Total
1	Mpigi	Mbazzi	19	16	35
2	Butambala	Nkinga	8	21	29
2	Masaka	Bukeeri	20	15	35
		Kagologolo	31	27	58
3	Rakai	Kizira	22	21	43
		Kajoki	13	9	22
Total			113	109	222

After the visioning exercises, community members developed indicators to track the changes in women's participation. The indicators developed through participatory monitoring tracked progress in implementation and in gender equality, including the number of women: (a) in leadership positions; (b) attending community meetings; (c) contributing actively during discussions; (d) owning trees on "their" farms and/or in CFRs; and (e) controlling income/benefits. The formulation of these indicators built on the prior knowledge of women's participation in key fora (i.e., community meetings) and influence in decision-making processes.

Most ACM implementation groups were formed voluntarily by both men and women in study sites after community sensitization and facilitation by the ACM team members. The groups selected activities both on-farm and in nearby forests that were mostly under the management of the governmental National Forestry Authority. On-farm activities were intended to reduce pressure on forests while generating income for both men and women. These on-farm activities included the establishment of individual and group tree nurseries, tree planting in agroforestry systems and woodlots, improved coffee, banana and vegetable production for income and improved food security, water harvesting and intensive fish farming in water tanks. These findings are particularly relevant for global forest restoration efforts (Erbaugh et al. 2020). Forest-based activities included group tree nursery establishment, tree planting using a *taungya*⁶ system, beekeeping and fish farming. During the process of implementation of planned activities, the participants identified capacity development needs in various aspects including alternative livelihood opportunities to reduce forest dependence, improved forest management practices, leadership and representation and gender concepts and applications. Consequently, the facilitation team organized trainings as well as exchange visits to other groups with good gender and forestry management practices.

In addition, linkages with relevant stakeholders (e.g., NGOs, government departments) who were able to support capacity development were established. These organizations provided various kinds of support to the groups, including

training in gender concepts and relations, tree nursery management, beekeeping, forest management and fish farming as well as material support such as seedlings and energy-saving stoves. Moreover, group organization allowed them to enter into legal agreements with the National Forestry Authority and to plant trees in areas allocated to them with a level of confidence that the NFA would not evict them, hence, incentivizing tree planting by both men and women. For women in particular, this pathway for acquiring assets was much more secure than through their husbands' land. Importantly, within-group rules of engagement, through the designing of constitutions, and their compliance with rules, helped to deal with the free-rider problem and other customary laws that were a hindrance to women's ownership of tree resources.

Monitoring and evaluation of planned activities followed implementation and was done through monthly community meetings. Group members reflected on activities they undertook, the lessons they learned and the re-planning process. Documentation of the process was a major component in order to present a complete record of the group's analysis, reflection and learning. All ACM team members were involved in process documentation (including local level co-facilitators). Visits to individual members' households were also made to monitor the progress of activities at the household level.

Second phase (February 2014 until September 2016)⁷

The second phase involved continued implementation of the first-phase activities and the addition of others aimed at disseminating experiences, obtaining feedback and expanding the ACM processes to other districts. These new activities included:

- a) Reporting progress of implementation to district political, technical and community officials
- b) Improvement of monitoring and evaluation indicators
- c) Conducting dissemination workshops to district and national level stakeholders to solicit feedback and validation of phase one results
- d) Conducting participatory planning workshops at the community level to reflect on their visions and re-strategize
- e) Leadership training
- f) Identification and training of co-facilitators
- g) Community exchange and study visits
- h) Training of communities, NGOs and government officials in ACM approaches in three new Districts
- i) Engaging legislators and other policy-makers in an effort to institutionalize ACM in government programmes.

At this stage, we focused on mixed groups of men and women in order to take advantage of synergies from both genders (Mwangi, Meinzen-Dick and Sun 2011). In addition, because gender is relational, increasing gender equity

requires an understanding of both men's and women's perceptions, values and activities in a culturally sensitive and open way (Evans et al. 2014). We used community-identified priorities and needs as logical entry points into the community. We anticipated that change towards gender equity in rights, decision making and benefit sharing would occur through careful facilitation and moderation by the ACM team while supporting the implementation of diverse activities and action plans identified jointly by men and women in the communities. These were focused on alleviating key forest-related concerns. The details of the overall ACM process pathway evolved organically as participants worked to implement their action plans. Figure 5.3 provides a framework illustrating the implementation of ACM and the pathway towards change.

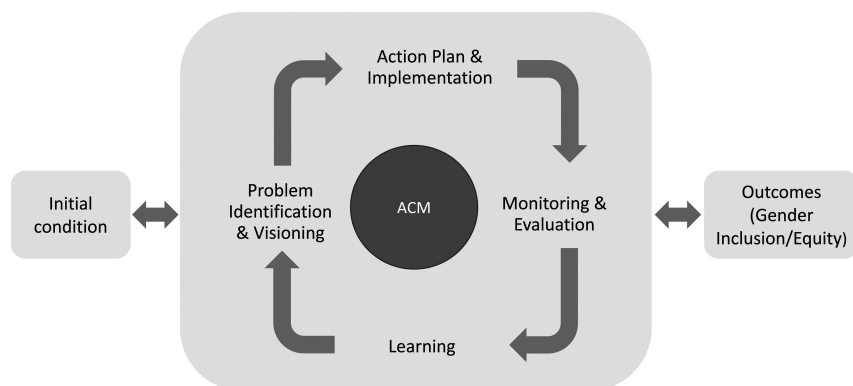


Figure 5.3 Framework of implementation of ACM activities.

Results and discussion

Our findings are presented in two parts: a) gender-focused dimensions, in particular women's and men's participation in decision making, group leadership, rights to trees and forests⁸ and b) the performance of the forest user groups after implementation of ACM activities. ACM implementation used community-level needs and priorities as an entry point for identifying and addressing gender-differentiated needs. The set of indicators used was developed jointly and validated by community members and other relevant stakeholders.

Advancing gender inclusion in forest management using the ACM approach

Enhanced women's participation in tree planting

Cultural norms⁹ inhibiting women from planting trees were a major concern raised by women during the visioning exercises. In the case of land, the local norms are quite strong. Although the constitution does not allow discrimination

in ownership of land, in reality, women own a negligible percentage of land. For instance, planting by women of certain trees on land owned by men in the central region of Uganda was taboo. This is because the planting of trees such as *Ficus natalensis* indicated land ownership and leadership. Some trees such as fruit trees could be tolerated, but *Ficus natalensis* and other timber tree species that were being promoted by the ACM project¹⁰ were not tolerated at all. *Ficus* and other timber trees could only be planted by the landowner. Therefore, even though the project goal was to increase women's participation in forest management, this was proving difficult to achieve even though government policies were supportive and fair. In order to deal with this challenge, the following activities were undertaken:

1. The ACM team facilitated and encouraged the formation of mixed groups of both men and women even though the project was targeting women. This was done to: remove all suspicions from men about the project inciting women to become insubordinate; ensure that both men and women accessed land for tree planting; and encourage men who were participating in the project (and whose attitudes had been transformed) to convince other men to support the women in their families to access land. It also enhanced women's confidence to speak out in the presence of men.
2. We provided gender training for both men and women group members. This helped to bring to the fore cultural taboos that were a hindrance to development such as preventing women from owning land, planting trees or even climbing them to harvest some products. Members were able to discuss these issues and suggest solutions to address the taboos related to forest management and tree planting. This further encouraged the men and women to practice equity at home and in group and community work.
3. The ACM teams continually sensitized participants about the importance of involving women in forest and tree management. Local examples of women who were involved in tree planting and management were given and their farms visited.
4. Land for men and women planting trees in the NFA CFR was allocated equally. This was made possible by the facilitation of the ACM team that signed an MOU with NFA to enable the participation of community members in collaborative forest management (CFM). Thereafter NFA allocated land to the community members, and community members themselves allocated land to members for tree planting in addition to allowing regeneration of the natural forest. In Mbazzi, each member (women and men) received 0.25 hectares (ha) where they each planted 200 eucalyptus trees, as individuals. The rest was left for indigenous tree species that they planted or left to regenerate. Women were encouraged by ACM facilitators to demonstrate to men their ability to manage tree planting as well as using the benefits for home development.

With the above facilitation from the ACM team, some men allowed women to plant trees on their farmland (Table 5.3). Women were allocated pieces of land by their husbands and were allowed to decide what tree species to plant. Across all sites, nearly 30% of women's user group members planted *Ficus* species, a "forbidden" tree species, as noted earlier, that symbolized land ownership. Two of these women reported earning income from the sale of bark cloth made from *Ficus*. Women also planted income-generating trees like *Eucalyptus*, *Pine* and *Maesopsis* spp. Table 5.3 shows the number of trees and species types planted by both men and women through the duration of this project. Overall, 98% of all group members in the study areas owned trees either on their farms, in the allocated forest reserves or in both areas (110 men and 173 women). The 2% comprises new members who had not yet gotten an opportunity to plant trees. This ownership of trees by women represents a deviation from widespread cultural norms.

Table 5.3 Number of trees planted by men and women user group members, four years after the facilitation of ACM processes in 2015

Species	Women	Men	Where women planted	Where men planted
<i>Eucalyptus</i>	6493	38,616	Mostly in allocated areas in CFR	Mostly in woodlots on private land
<i>Grevillea</i>	740	460	On boundaries on farmland	As shade trees in coffee
<i>Ficus</i>	190	400	In agroforestry mixtures on farmland	In agroforestry mixtures on farmland
<i>Maesopsis</i>	247	450	On privately owned land	As boundary markers and as shade trees in coffee
Fruit trees	350	460	Mostly in the compound and tended seedlings in home gardens	Compound and elsewhere on the farm
<i>Pine</i>	209	534	One or two as compound trees	As woodlots on private land
Others	312	450	As allowed by the owner of the land	As deemed necessary
Total	8,541	41,370		

When young, trees on farmland were mostly managed by women, with men taking over when the trees were mature, while those in woodlots and coffee plantations were mostly managed by men. Trees planted in the CFR were managed by their owners (both men and women). When it came to the marketing of the products, the selling of products from trees on farmland and woodlots was mostly by men while those from the CFR were sold by both men and women owners. We learned that women had decision-making powers on trees grown in the CFR that they owned, and they received all the resulting income.

The difference in the numbers of trees planted by women and men in Table 5.3 was driven by land ownership and access to financial capital. The

area available for tree planting for women was largely static as they did not have the ability to purchase or sell the land. Women and men members of the group received equal allocations of land in the CFR, which was a quarter of a hectare each. This was used to plant *Eucalyptus* in order to get quick wood products. The rest of the land was planted with indigenous tree species. The higher numbers of trees planted by men were due to the male youth having gained a keen interest in tree planting – many youths acquired more land through either purchase or from their parents.

A survey conducted in 2013 revealed that out of a sample of 144 group members, about 80% had planted their priority tree species – of these, 55% were women. The most popular species was *Eucalyptus* (for fast generation of poles and firewood) followed by *Grevillea* (for timber, firewood and its capacity to integrate well with crops). The survey indicated that a total of 18,753 trees had been planted, with a survival rate of 80.6%.

Most of the women participating in the programme claimed to have gained control over benefits from the trees and to have made decisions about the use of incomes from tree sales. With regard to timber, only 49 women (out of 173 respondents to this question) had planted *Eucalyptus*, some in the CFR and others on their farmlands. As earlier explained, some could not convince their spouses to allocate them land for *Eucalyptus* planting; others knew that they would not benefit from their efforts even if they planted so they resorted to other tree species. In 2015, four years after implementation of ACM activities, only five women had started harvesting and two claimed to have independently made the decision to harvest and control their income. Three of the five women who had harvested their trees used the poles for constructing poultry housing. Overall, only 10% of the women reported earning income from selling forest/tree products (e.g., poles, handicrafts and fruits) and controlling the income. By 2020, members of the Mbazzi ACM group reported that about 70% of the women in the group had sold their trees after reaching maturity. The majority of them had replanted their woodlots. The control of incomes and benefits from trees planted and managed by women and other alternative income-generating activities represent yet another deviation from household practices that had mostly conferred decision making and control rights to men.

With the implementation of ACM activities, some women became more empowered to the extent that they handled large sums of money. This was demonstrated by the following statement by a woman from the Mbazzi group:

I am not educated. Previously, I was shy and could not say anything openly in a meeting but now I also talk in meetings and some of my ideas are taken seriously. In addition, I had never handled even Ugandan Shillings 100,000 [USD1 = 3,500 Ug. Shs.] as my own, but now I get even a million shillings. I have an asset of 200 *Eucalyptus* trees which I never thought I would own. Now if I have a critical financial need, I can sell some as poles. But I would like to wait for them to grow bigger. After seeing the benefits from the ACM group, my husband who is not an ACM group

member is now the one who reminds me of the meeting days and time so that I do not miss the meeting.

(Female, 38 years, Mbazzi).

Enhanced women's participation in leadership and decision making

Exclusion from tree and forestry-related decision-making processes, despite their use and management of forests and trees, and their absence in leadership positions were major concerns raised by women during visioning exercises in the study sites. At the beginning of the project, a few women had been involved in leadership in the local government due to the affirmative action by the government, requiring that 30% of leaders should be women. The women mostly filled posts as secretaries for forest user groups but were not empowered for decision making. The ACM team adopted the following strategies to encourage women to take on leadership posts in the groups.

- From the start, it was clearly stated that the involvement of men in the project was mainly to support the process of empowering women to participate in decision making. Men who were not in support dropped out.
- There was a deliberate effort to encourage women to actively participate in discussions during monthly meetings and trainings. The ACM team members would deliberately call out individuals to give their input even if they were quiet during meetings.
- On realizing women's capacity gap in leadership, the ACM team organized leadership training courses for the leaders during the implementation. Thus, every woman who accepted a leadership post was given leadership training, twice during the life of the project.
- The women were deliberately encouraged to stand and compete for all leadership posts both in the group and in the local government.
- They were also taken for exposure visits to see and learn from other successful groups with women in leadership positions.
- Special rewards (such as recognition, taking visitors to their homes, taking them to workshops) encouraged them to keep participating in leadership positions.

Various capacity development trainings were offered to group members (including the women leaders) and these included training on PAR. Tailor-made trainings to meet felt needs were also offered and these included: how to collaborate, manage and work together as a group; community forest management rules and regulations; tree nursery management; grafting; apiculture management; fish farming; look and learn tours; and leadership. All these trainings helped to boost the confidence of all forest user group members, especially the women, and equip them with the skills they needed to deal with the challenges they faced. Leadership training provided women leaders with knowledge, communication skills and confidence. Similarly, men

who participated in the leadership training were equipped with the same skills and in addition they were able to recognize the need to make room for women to get involved in leadership. This further enhanced women leaders' confidence and capability to lead and guide the groups effectively. Training in gender concepts and applications for both men and women also provided opportunities for open discussion of underlying gender norms and values and the usefulness (or not) in the context of forest management and broader development.

Prior to implementing ACM, the two existing user groups each had one woman among nine men on the executive committees. One year after the introduction of ACM and the formation of four more forest user groups, more women were elected to leadership positions on these committees. By 2012, a total of 24 women were now part of the executive committees in the six forest user groups. By 2016, the number of women executive committee members had risen to 36. In 2016, three out of six groups were chaired by women, five women were vice-chairpersons, six were treasurers, one was a secretary and ten were committee members. The remaining 11 were executives in the village bank committees. Executive committees had the responsibility of mobilizing group members to implement joint activities, with each member responsible for a particular activity, such as documentation, treasury, tree nursery, beekeeping, information and gender and HIV activities. The chairperson heads the executive committee and represents members at different forums. She/he was supposed to reach out and communicate with outsiders on matters concerning the group. All the groups have women treasurers because women were usually more trusted locally with money than men. There was only one woman in the position of secretary because generally women had lower educational levels. Table 5.4 summarizes the distribution of leadership positions between women and men in the groups.

Electing women to leadership positions was an important step towards involving them in user group decision making, setting agendas and ensuring

Table 5.4 Leadership in ACM groups in 2016

<i>Group</i>	<i>Total no. of executive committee members</i>	<i>Men</i>	<i>Women</i>	<i>Chairperson</i>
Mbazzi user group	9	4	5	Woman
Mbazzi village bank	8	3	5	Woman
Nkinga user group	8	6	2	Man
Nkinga village bank	7	2	5	Man
Kajoki user group	7	3	4	Woman
Kizira user group	7	4	3	Man
Kagologolo user group	7	4	3	Man
Kagologolo village bank	7	2	5	Man
Bukeeri user group	7	3	4	Woman
Total	67	31	36	

that women's interests were reflected in forest use and management decisions. The larger the number of women on the executive committee, the greater the likelihood of women participating effectively in governing forests (Agarwal 2010).

Follow-up on the groups revealed that many women who were empowered during the ACM activities had continued to hold leadership positions within the projects and some even went beyond project activities to represent their communities in decision making for several years after the project ended, showing the sustainability of the outcomes realized by the project (Table 5.5).

Table 5.5 Women's leadership roles in ACM groups in 2020

<i>District</i>	<i>Group</i>	<i>Leadership situation</i>
Masaka	Bukeeri village	Empowered women still in group leadership trying to steer the limping group and find alternative support (not yet realized).
Butambala	Nkinga village Twekembe Environmental Group (NTEGO)	Women still hold leadership positions. Also because of their empowerment, many women in forest user groups continue to be nominated to represent their constituencies on various fora.
Rakai District	Kizira Village Bataka Twekembe farmers group	Group leader is a male youth and women still hold leadership posts as treasurer, secretary for defence and secretary for information.
Rakai District	Kajoki village Kajoki farmers group	The chairperson is a woman.
Mpigi District	Mbazzi village Mbazzi Farmers Association	The group separated into two groups after some leadership misunderstandings – the old leadership refused to hand over instruments of power and this caused the separation of members into two groups. One of the groups has 26 members and is led by a man, another has 14 members led by a woman.

Improved confidence of women members in leadership and decision making

Poor attendance at meetings and general lack of confidence to speak up and express their interests and preferences during meetings were other concerns raised by women in the visioning exercises. Leadership training and facilitation by the ACM team helped increase women members' confidence. In the initial stages of ACM interventions, the elected women leaders lacked confidence and delegated most of their work to the men on the executive committees. After the leadership training and with continuous encouragement from the ACM facilitators, unnecessary delegation stopped and the women leaders also began to approach necessary offices in person or through telephone calls.

To assess change in women's confidence in contributing to discussions during group meetings, the number of contributions by women during meetings were recorded for 23 community activities for the six user groups. The average contribution to discussions per activity was 23 times for men and 20 times for women (this information covers the second phase of implementation as women rarely contributed during the first phase). Before ACM, women rarely spoke during the meetings. After the implementation of ACM activities, women have sometimes contributed more than men on a subject matter of interest to them, such as discussions about herbal medicine and handicraft raw materials.

In addition, there was a noticeable increase in attendance at meetings by women. Average attendance per monthly meeting, during the second phase, was nine for men and 14 for women out of 47 recorded meetings. A total of 105 monthly meetings (58 meetings during the first phase and 47 meetings during the second phase) at community level were conducted through the course of the project. Each monthly meeting involved an average of 13 women and 11 men in each user group. For all groups, attendance was always best on village savings meeting days for both men and women since there was an incentive to attend and a penalty for not attending.

Overall, women showed more commitment towards group activities and were also becoming more open and confident. A case in point demonstrating the gained confidence is where 18 women vied for village-level political leadership positions during the national elections of 2016; compared with only two who had attempted to do so in the past. One woman attributed her decision to stand for political leadership to the fact that she had gained enough experience of leadership in the ACM group; she was in charge of nursery operations where she was required to mobilize and manage both men and women for work. Another woman group member has been chosen as a chief in the Buganda Kingdom, a cultural institution, after demonstrating her leadership skills.

Performance of forest user groups using ACM

Implementation of ACM resulted in several positive developments that have been sustained by four of the six groups involved in the study. These results are discussed separately below.

Improved formalization of forest user groups

Prior to the start of the ACM facilitation, four out of six forest user groups were operating informally without registration. By the end of the first phase of ACM facilitation, all six communities had formally registered. Registration for all the groups was renewed in 2016. Most forest user groups in the region operated informally mainly because of the tedious registration process. Through ACM, groups acquired the confidence, skills and contacts with stakeholders who helped them to negotiate and register their groups as required by Community Based Organizations' (CBO) regulations.

Using ACM facilitators, all six groups developed constitutions, which stipulated the group objectives, election of leaders, duration and terms of leaders, membership requirements, benefits and privileges of membership, penalties for infractions, conditions for exit and terms and conditions for disbanding the group. Further, with the help of the ACM facilitators, the groups crafted regulations to govern their activities.

Legal recognition of the user groups created new opportunities not available to informal groups. For example, the groups were able to obtain funding from the central and local governments in support of income-generating activities and training in improved farming practices. One group received widespread recognition as a national model of good practice in reforestation using indigenous tree species.

Improved participation in CFM activities

Community participation in CFM substantially increased over the course of the ACM intervention. Prior to ACM, people were not regularly participating in CFM activities. They were concerned about limited involvement in decision making in forest-related issues, for example, the leasing of CFR land to outsiders (non-community members) under the NFA's reforestation programme. Through ACM facilitation and support, two groups formalized CFM partnerships with the NFA. They were subsequently allocated 75 ha of degraded forest reserve land for replanting on a 35-year lease basis (MBAFA from Mbazzi was allocated 50 ha and NTEGO from Nkinga village, 25 ha). The MBAFA members decided to allocate 0.25 ha to each member for individual tree planting. The rest of the land was left for indigenous tree species, which were either planted or left to regenerate from stumps. This part was owned and managed as a group. Under this programme, both men and women in the two groups own the trees they plant within the time frame of the lease.

Improved relationship between local communities and other stakeholders

The relationship between NFA officials and community members living around the CFRs in the study sites has improved substantially compared with what it was before ACM. NFA, as the official manager of the CFRs, has all the power to allow or refuse use of the forest. Regular interactions between NFA and the communities is important in order to access allowable CFR products. NFA interactions were more frequent with the four groups neighbouring the CFR. The reserves neighbouring the remaining two groups were completely degraded, which minimized the perceived need for interactions between these communities and the NFA. Prior to ACM, there was a lot of mistrust: communities were illegally harvesting forest products while the NFA was viciously enforcing the forest laws and regulations. Community members used to complain about "strange people" (outsiders) who came with permits and harvested from the forest, which made locals think that the forest

only benefited outsiders. Another complaint was failure by NFA officials to discuss matters of forest management amicably with the communities. The ACM process involved NFA officials in community-level planning, implementation and monitoring and created a platform that brought officials in closer contact with communities on a regular basis, allowing a discussion of community grievances, NFA limitations and the building of joint/common objectives.

Besides strengthening linkages and relationships between community groups and the NFA, the ACM team reached out to other actors, including NGOs, the private sector and religious organizations. Some of these actors, through their involvement in the ACM process, have provided support to the groups to enhance forest and tree management. For example, several organizations supported communities through training in leadership, provision of tree seedlings, tree grafting, purchase of solar systems, improved firewood cook stoves, installation of village internet, permaculture, improved agricultural practices in support of land intensification and value addition to their produce. Support by NGOs and the government to these groups continued even after the project ended (see Table 5.6).

Improving conflict resolution

Conflict management was one of the topics handled during leadership training, and as a result, group leaders used the acquired skills to develop various methods of resolving internal conflicts to prevent escalation to a level that would disrupt group activities. Examples of common within-group conflicts included failure by leaders to call for regular meetings or misuse of the group's income from the sale of tree seedlings. Such conflicts have been resolved through discussions, and in some cases, the leaders resigned but still remained members of the forest user groups. Other causes of conflict have included: poor loan repayment; misuse of nursery equipment; destruction of tree seedlings; lack of trust and transparency; poor leadership; poor benefit sharing; lack of respect; and gossiping. Groups have been able to resolve such issues without disrupting their activities or disintegrating. Similarly, misunderstandings between the NFA and some group members over land allocation in the CFR were resolved amicably.

Investment in income-generating activities

At the start of the project, communities expressed concern over forest degradation. One of the reasons given for the continuous degradation of forests was the lack of alternative income-generating activities. Through the project's ACM intervention, participants identified income-generating projects that they felt would help meet their needs for basic goods and services and thus lower their level of dependence on the forests. These included village banking, the promotion of improved cook stoves, water harvesting facilities and

Table 5.6 Status of ACM group activities in 2020

<i>District</i>	<i>Group</i>	<i>Status</i>
Masaka	Bukeeri village	<p>The group disintegrated and some of the members joined other groups. The National Agricultural Advisory Services (NAADS) through the district local government has continued to give support by providing free coffee seedlings. Consequently, the majority of former members (men and women) are currently involved in coffee growing instead of tree planting.</p> <p>Beekeeping, their main activity, failed and all the hives were damaged. In 2017, the group harvested 20 litres of honey and sold it for Uganda shillings 100,000 (USD 30). Savings groups also failed because of defaulting on loans. The trees that were planted during the project life are currently being harvested as firewood. Two members of the group were grafting passion fruit using knowledge gained during the project. The <i>Ficus</i> trees that were planted are also being harvested to provide firewood instead of bark cloth production as originally planned due to lack of skilled bark cloth craftsmen (bark cloth making is traditionally done by men only).</p>
Butambala	Nkinga Twekembe Environmental Group (NTEGO)	<p>Group is still active with over 100 members from Nkinga and other surrounding villages. The group is still being supported by the district local government and one NGO known as Mpigi Farmers Association (MPIFA).</p> <p>Group members were allocated 25 ha in 2013 in the Central Forest Reserve (CFR). The members of the group have individually planted <i>Eucalyptus</i> trees. Tree planting and management activities continued after the end of the project. Harvesting was ongoing with members (men and women) benefiting economically. Beekeeping was still ongoing with group members receiving more support from the district local government. Fish farming activity failed after heavy rains washed away the fishpond embankments and carried off the fish.</p> <p>Challenge: the entire natural forest that was protected by the group members was allocated to the public and has all been converted to farmlands and <i>Eucalyptus</i> plantations.</p>

(Continued)

Table 5.6 (Continued)

<i>District</i>	<i>Group</i>	<i>Status</i>
Rakai district	Kizira village Bataka Twekembe farmers group	The group still exists with 17 members. They are still involved in tree planting and management and members benefit from selling trees and from other farming activities such as production of sweet bananas for export, coffee farming and village banking. However, the group abandoned beekeeping as a group activity as it was found not to be economical.
Rakai district	Kajoki village Kajoki Farmers Group	Although the group is still active, its membership decreased to only eight people (four men and four women). The group is still involved in tree planting and beekeeping. They are currently producing 20 litres of honey per season. They planted <i>Ficus</i> trees, and the group is producing bark cloth harvested from those trees for sale. The <i>Ficus</i> tree branches are used by the group as poles for supporting passion fruits. The village bank is no longer functional.
Mpigi district	Mbazzi village: Mbazzi Farmers Association	This group is still very active. Members still conduct weekly meetings. The group owns 25 ha of forest planted with indigenous trees and 25 ha planted with <i>Eucalyptus</i> trees. Some compartments of the forest have already reached maturity and the trees have been harvested and sold to timber processors. Two members of the group (a male youth and one woman) have established commercial tree nurseries. They are using the skills gained during the ACM project to manage them. The group has continued to collaborate with NFA for guidance on how to manage their forest. The district local government is continuing to support the group with development funds for alternative income-generating projects as well as capacity building. Some of the members, especially the youth, are involved in training other groups in the vicinity on how to start and implement ACM. For income generation, the group is producing wine from the <i>Hibiscus</i> plant. They are also developing outside catering services. However, the group abandoned fish farming and beekeeping because they were not economical.

raising tree seedlings. Exchange visits among the ACM groups exposed them to opportunities availed through village banking programmes, which allowed them to pool resources. All six groups started village banking projects in which women demonstrated their leadership capabilities as well. Through village banks, women were able to obtain loans guaranteed by their fellow members that they used to run other income-generating activities, which served to reduce pressures on the forests and for livelihood improvement. The majority of women had previously never saved money and were not able to get loans, but after the implementation of ACM activities, they were able to accumulate some savings. Two village banks with 76 members had accumulated capital of up to USD 21,000 after three years of implementation of ACM activities. The village banks attracted additional members into the ACM groups and the anticipation of monetary benefits helped spur a greater commitment of members to group activities. Other non-ACM village banking groups also developed as a result of this initiative.

One woman from Mbazzi summed up the impact of the ACM activities in the community by saying

When I came to Mbazzi village, firewood selling, locally known as *kabajjo*, was the main business venture. Men and women would cut trees from the forest and turn them into firewood which was sold to people from the nearby city. This was done until the forest was completely degraded and the area turned into maize gardens. However, with the coming of ACM, all this has been reversed. The forest has been restored and there are alternative income-generating projects that are not forest based.

An early 2020 follow-up of ACM activities revealed that, although some activities had stopped, many were still ongoing, years after the project ended, showing their sustainability (Table 5.6). In some cases, for example, Mbazzi, the group was still very active and had moved further in adding value to their products, resulting in the realization of more income. On the other hand, the Bukeeri group is less active and members have joined other groups. However, the positive impacts of some of the activities that were carried out in the early days of the project are being realized. For example, the *Ficus natalensis* trees that were planted are now being harvested for their various products such as bark cloth, fodder and firewood from the branches. No information was available from the Kagologolo group as leadership had been disbanded.

Concluding remarks

After six years of ACM implementation in six field sites, involving 110 men and 173 women, the results show remarkable improvements with regard to women's empowerment and decision-making as demonstrated by the increased

number of women in leadership positions and hence participating in decision making, attending community meetings, owning woodlots, venturing into public and political spaces and planting trees.

These gender-transformative outcomes can be attributed to several factors. The most fundamental is the creation of safe, non-intimidating spaces for women to speak up and share their opinions in the presence of men in mixed-gender forest user groups. Working with women alongside their husbands and other men helped both groups to benefit, providing a safeguard against possible backlash against women, as has occurred elsewhere. The process importantly brought men more squarely into the centre of gender equality initiatives, securing their buy-in and laying the foundation for a sustainable transformation of gender relations. Additional factors include the following: exposure through exchange programmes; leadership training (for both men and women); and continued support for forest user groups from collaborating partners. The ACM approach in this study provided a promising pathway for achieving meaningful gender inclusion in forestry access, management, decision-making and benefit sharing. This in turn resulted in broader positive livelihoods and sustainable forest management outcomes.

In terms of lessons that can be learned from this study, ACM seems to provide a promising pathway for achieving meaningful gender inclusion in forestry (a male-dominated arena) and tenure (gender-biased customary norms) but also for achieving joint livelihoods and resource sustainability outcomes. Importantly, men appear to be critical in strengthening women's rights and overall empowerment and mixed groups of men and women can be useful pathways for this, particularly after a phase of women-only groups. This study has also demonstrated that even though rights may be granted by statute, they are not automatically exercised due to cultural norms, lack of information and inadequate budgets to implement them. Additionally, in the absence of effective implementation of gender-equitable statutes, negotiation and facilitation by trusted intermediaries can begin to strengthen women's rights and participation. Indeed, exercising rights and deriving value/benefit are two sides of the same coin; and although tenure rights matter in and of themselves, to most forest adjacent communities, they are a pathway to securing their livelihoods. Benefits derived from exercising rights are also critical incentives for sustainable forest use and management. Also, collective action/organization and linkages to external actors are key to communities being able to exercise rights, secure them and derive value from their rights. Customary laws that are usually regarded as "sticky" were possible to change, thereby offering the potential for enhancing gender equity over a short period of time. Moreover, ACM demonstrated that joint outcomes of resource and livelihoods sustainability (and gender inclusion) are possible and not always necessarily at cross-purposes, and supporting on-farm, income-generating projects can have benefits for forests. Finally, cross-community visits and exchanges are a valuable source of learning and diffusion of good practices that deserve sustained investment and/or integration into sector projects and programmes.

As a way forward, the scaling up and out of the ACM approach to policy-makers and development practitioners in other parts of the country was critical. This project began this process through training practitioners and policy-makers in an additional three districts, however, this was insufficient, and much more needed to be done in terms of dissemination and supporting practice. Fortunately, government officials in the forestry sector noted the usefulness of the approach and with further support pledged to build elements of ACM into their projects and programmes as part of a broad process of institutionalizing the approach.

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Notes

- 1 The chapter is dedicated to the memory of the late Dr Esther Mwangi, whose dedication and commitment to improving the wellbeing of women in forestry was unsurpassed.
- 2 In the central region, much of the land is *mailo* (freehold by individuals) and *Kibanja* (tenant), both owned by individuals. The individual has all rights, and the state or clan elders will come in to arbitrate in cases of violation of those rights.
- 3 In this part of Uganda, tenure rights do overlap. The landlord has the land title from the government, but on this land, there may be other occupants, sometimes referred to as tenants. They have rights as long as they pay rent. But if one stays on this land for more than 12 years, the right to the land is assured by the state as well. To remove him or her from the land, the owner has to compensate him or her for the developments on the land. The tenant can transfer his or her rights to other people through sale or inheritance following customary norms. There are other rules normally set by the state in case of customary disagreements.
- 4 The ACM team was comprised of several members from various institutions including the university, non-governmental organizations and the local community. The members had various skills and expertise and played specific roles in the implementation of ACM activities. Expertise of team members included agroforestry, forestry and forestry governance, environment conservation, participatory methods, gender mainstreaming, agricultural extension, natural resources management and leadership development. Local community members who were part of the team comprised a gender-balanced team of two, one man and one woman selected by the local communities using the following criteria: i) local residence; ii) literate and fluent in the local language; iii) Some knowledge of English; and iv) willing to receive training in communication and documentation.

- 5 External facilitators were critical during the beginning of the PAR process as local community members were doing this for the first time. Because these two facilitators were women, they could spend a lot of time working with women and sometimes visiting them individually to check on their progress.
- 6 *Taungya* is a method of planting forest trees in combination with food crops – usually introduced to restore tree cover. Farmers are allowed to cultivate crops for the first few years as the seedlings get established on degraded forest land.
- 7 There was a hiatus in implementation of the project when a new contract was being negotiated and approved with the donor – ADA.
- 8 These were the main indicators selected for monitoring the progress of ACM implementation.
- 9 These included their exclusion from tree and forestry-related decisions despite their use and management of forests and trees, their absence in leadership positions, their poor attendance at meetings and their general lack of confidence to speak up and express their interests and preferences during meetings. In addition, gender biases and cultural norms prevented them from planting trees, a traditional way of marking land ownership. Various studies have also shown that lack of policy instruments to support gender implementation at all governance levels, low literacy levels, insecure tenure to land and tree resources and inequitable benefit sharing are some of the factors impeding women from participating in forest management (Banana et al. 2012; Mukasa et al. 2012).
- 10 This species had been selected based on community preferences. These derived from ease and speed of planting, speedy growth of useful products, easy pollarding, and beneficial integration with other crops.

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