Securing tenure rights to communal forests in Masindi district, Uganda

LESSONS FROM PARTICIPATORY PROSPECTIVE ANALYSIS

Key messages

- The Participatory Prospective Analysis (PPA) process in Masindi district in Uganda’s Western Region brought together stakeholders from government, the private sector, NGOs and local communities to collectively reflect on factors affecting local tenure rights, forecast future scenarios and propose actionable plans for securing forest tenure rights.

- Participants identified several factors threatening local forest tenure rights. These included: lack of land ownership documentation; inadequate implementation and enforcement of forest policies, laws and programs; land use changes; gender bias against women; political interference; lack of community awareness of forest tenure rights; and inadequate financial and human resources to effectively protect local people’s rights to forests and land.

- To identify potential barriers and drivers, three workshops were organized. With both forestry and agricultural sectors being male-dominated, one women-only workshop was organized to capture women’s perspectives and compare findings with those of the mixed gender group.

- The two groups identified four key “driving forces” impacting forest tenure security: (1) community participation in forest tenure reform implementation, particularly that of women; (2) access to financial resources to implement forest tenure reform activities; (3) the importance of outside organizations having an awareness of community, cultural and institutional norms and beliefs regarding forest tenure rights; (4) the role played by local and national government agencies and politicians in coordinating and promoting progress towards forest tenure reforms.

- Women stakeholders emphasized the importance of access to land for forestry activities as critical to securing their rights; they also noted that supportive men and domestic relationships can impact on women’s rights to forest land. Mixed group stakeholders identified the role of oil, gas and other industrial activities as a key threat to local forest tenure security.

- Participants developed four scenarios to anticipate potential future situations impacting on local forest tenure rights. Desirable scenarios depicted a well-governed, well-financed forestry sector characterized by gender equality and participative forest management. Undesirable scenarios were characterized by a dominant oil and gas sector undermining forest sustainability and forest rights; a weak, underfunded and poorly-managed forest sector; forest conversion to other uses; government failure to recognize community rights and integrate communities in forest management; and disappointed, disempowered communities collectively destroying forests for survival instead of managing them sustainably.

- Several actions were identified to secure local forest tenure rights: 1) making district-level government more responsive to local needs and aspirations around community forest tenure reforms; 2) increasing the number of well-trained district government officers and providing adequate financial resources; 3) facilitating a faster and affordable process for community forest registration, including community incentives; 4) equipping communities with knowledge, skills and resources to enhance their participation in forest tenure reform implementation; 5) promoting environmentally and socially responsible investments to mobilize resources for protecting local people’s forest tenure rights.
Introduction

With the adoption of Uganda’s new Constitution in the 1990s, the country ushered in several reforms to forest and land tenure systems, characterized by a return to the recognition of kingdom land, and an expanded scope of forest-dependent people’s rights. To implement and achieve these reforms, the Forest Sector Support Department (FSSD) and National Forestry Authority (NFA) were established and respectively tasked with policy-making and implementation. Since the early 2000s, technical and financial support from national and international NGOs has enabled the government to implement diverse forest management approaches, with the intention of expanding local communities’ (and other actors’) rights to use and manage forests; by increasing their stake in forests the aim is to encourage more sustainable use and management of them. Despite this political and financial impetus, numerous challenges prevent significant progress being made in community forest tenure security.

In this context, a multi-stakeholder consultative process known as Participatory Prospective Analysis (PPA) was undertaken, as part of the Global Comparative Study (GCS) on Forest Tenure Reform and Forest Dependent Communities led by the Center for International Forestry Research (CIFOR). It was implemented in partnership with Makerere University and the Association of Ugandan Professional Women in Agriculture and Environment. This flyer details the process undertaken, as well as the threats to forest tenure security that it identified, potential future scenarios and proposed actions to secure tenure rights for local forest-dependent communities in Masindi district (hereinafter referred to as Masindi) in Uganda’s Western Region. Masindi has high rates of deforestation and is home to communities with limited access to nearby forest resources.

Methodology - The PPA process

Participatory Prospective Analysis (PPA) workshops were used to facilitate a multi-stakeholder participatory identification of forest tenure security scenarios and to elaborate a series of actions in response to the scenarios identified. The PPA process comprises five steps:

1. Defining the “system”
   Stakeholders begin by clarifying four dimensions of the issue to be addressed: what, where, how long and who? These four dimensions define what is called a system.

2. Detecting and defining “forces of change”
   Stakeholders identify and define forces of change, which could be a program, factor, policy, law, management practice, issue or activity.

3. Identifying and selecting “driving forces”
   Stakeholders prioritize the forces of change, selecting driving forces that they can focus on within the constraints of time, technical, financial and other resources. The driving forces have the highest capacity to transform the system, in whichever direction.

4. Building scenarios
   Rather than being a prediction or a forecast, a scenario is an anticipation of a possible future transformation, through the exploration of alternative paths that the driving forces could take. Scenarios are categorized into desirable or undesirable.

5. Elaborating a foresight-based action plan
   Participants elaborate an action plan based on the desired scenario, identifying relevant actions for attaining the desired scenario, and discussing proposed actions.

In Masindi, the PPA process was conducted in two three-day workshops, with a third one-day workshop to validate findings and agree on action plans. The first workshop covering steps 1–2 above was held 21–23 September 2015; the second focused on steps 3–5 and was held 10–12 November 2015. A total of 24 participants (21 men, 3 women) attended the workshops, with the feedback workshop attracting 28 participants (22 men, 6 women). Because the forestry sector is male-dominated, women’s participation was very low. To ensure women’s perspectives and interests were considered, 15 women attended a women-only workshop covering steps 1–2, which was held 16–18 August 2016.
Participants at these workshops represented a cross-section of local government stakeholders, including District Forest Services (DFS), National Forestry Authority (NFA), Departments of Natural Resources, Culture and Community Development; other participants included political leaders, NGOs / Community-based Organizations (CBOs), teachers, community members, cultural leaders, religious leaders, police, students and media.

Outcomes of the PPA process

Defining the system

In defining the issue to be addressed (the system), stakeholders considered local people’s rights under various district-wide forest management systems. The forest tenure systems implemented in Masindi include Customary Forests, Collaborative Forest Management, Public Forests (central government forest reserves), Private Forest Management, and Community Forest Management.

Mixed group stakeholders defined the system as “forest tenure security for the people of Masindi district until 2025, but with a review after five years.” Forest tenure security was defined as “local people’s forest and land tenure rights being well-protected into the foreseeable future.” Ten years was the agreed timeframe to consider both feasibility for action and the ability to foresee changes.

Women stakeholders agreed on a different definition, choosing instead to define the system as “forest tenure security for women in Masindi within the next five years and upheld for forty years.”

This is a marked difference from the expectation of the mixed group, with women desiring forest tenure security to be achieved in half the timeframe, and expressing expectation that tenure rights should also be guaranteed for future generations. Both groups agreed on periodic reviews of five years.

Forces of change

The mixed group identified 32 forces of change while the women-only workshop identified 35. These were categorized into internal and external forces. Internal forces arise from the context within the district, over which stakeholders have more control. External forces are those arising from outside the district, over which stakeholders have little or no influence (e.g. climate change or natural catastrophes). Internal forces of change were further grouped into social forces (e.g. cultural norms on land inheritance), technical forces (e.g. boundary demarcation), economic forces (e.g. financial resources for forest tenure reform implementation), and policy factors (e.g. political influence). The PPA process adopts definitions agreed by participants based on local context, rather than basing them on text-book or scholarly definitions.

Driving forces

Mixed group stakeholders identified five key driving forces to be used in development scenarios in the next step (Table 1), while the women-only stakeholders identified eight. The two groups shared four common key driving forces, while the mixed group had one unique key driving force, and the women identified three unique key driving forces.

The shared driving forces were: 1) community participation in forest tenure reform implementation, paying special attention to women’s skills and involvement in planning and implementing activities aimed at securing forest tenure rights; 2) access to financial resources for implementing forest tenure reform activities (such as registration); 3) communities’ awareness of their forest tenure rights and the role of cultural institutions, norms and beliefs in securing them;

Table 1. Selected key driving forces

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>DRIVING FORCE</th>
<th>DEFINITION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Role of government agencies</td>
<td>The government is the lead agency in implementing or enforcing policies, laws and programs related to forest tenure security.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Community participation in forest management, including the role of women</td>
<td>The level of community involvement in planning, implementing, decision-making, and monitoring decisions related to forest tenure security of forest-dependent communities; including the knowledge, attitudes, and role of women in forestry management.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Oil and gas and other industrial activities</td>
<td>The nature and impact of oil, gas and other industrial activities on the environment, forest tenure security, and peoples’ livelihoods; including the role of private sector in forest tenure security.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Access to financial resources</td>
<td>Availability of funds accessible to communities and forest agencies for forest tenure reform implementation and payment for ecosystem services (incentives/economic value attached to forest conservation e.g. carbon trading).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Cultural institutions, norms, beliefs and practices</td>
<td>Individual and collective views relating to forest tenure security, based on customs and practices. The role played by cultural institutions in forest tenure security.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4) the role of government (local, district and national) agencies and politicians in coordinating and promoting progress in forest tenure reforms.

Women stakeholders emphasized the importance of their access to land for forestry activities as a crucial factor in securing their forest rights. They also identified supportive men and domestic relationships as critical for women’s tenure rights. The mixed group identified the role of oil, gas and other industrial activities as a key driving force impacting forest tenure security in Masindi.

Scenarios of the future

Participants outlined descriptions of how forest tenure security in Masindi may unfold in future, basing these on a set of assumptions about the “states” of the key driving forces. The state of a driving force refers to how it will evolve in future, either becoming a supporting or limiting factor for forest tenure security. Participants deduced states for all five selected driving forces and considered those which were more and less desirable, before developing four scenarios, one ideal (Scenario 1) and three (Scenarios 2, 3 and 4) that diverge from the ideal, having with mixed positive and negative results. The four scenarios illustrate stakeholders’ aspirations for securing local tenure rights and illuminate some of the main elements impacting tenure security. The scenarios also capture stakeholders’ concerns about securing tenure rights in the future. Scenario 1 represents an ideal, envisioning a well-governed forestry sector characterized by stakeholder participation, provisions of incentives for sustainable forest management, adequate budgets for tenure reform implementation, organized communities and women’s involvement in decision making and leadership, with substantial support from cultural institutions that enforce their inheritance and land ownership rights.

The rest of the scenarios diverge from this ideal in profound ways that are rooted in current realities. For example, Scenario 2 envisions a responsible private sector (dominant oil and gas sector), which stimulates broader economic development but also supports sustainable forest and land management. An unsupportive public sector, however, leaves forestry weak, underfunded and subject to corruption. Conversion of forests to other land uses, and failure to recognize community rights, results in communities collectively destroying forests rather than managing them sustainably.

In contrast, in Scenario 3 it is “business as usual” and government policies do not secure the tenure rights of forest-dependent communities and leave communities out of policy planning. The forestry sector instead oversees implementation of policies that, like Scenario 2, results in forest allocation to other sectors, especially oil and gas companies and other private investors. Reforms that have the potential for securing tenure rights of communities are not prioritized, and there is recentralization of forest management authority. Cultural institutions are also extinguished. As in Scenario 2, the management authority loses legitimacy, and communities have no incentive to sustainably manage forests so instead destroy forests.

Scenario 4 envisions government failure to secure tenure rights of local people, particularly those of women. However, this prompts women to become active in tenure reform implementation. Women’s forest tenure rights and their involvement in reform implementation are supported by cultural institutions, which allow women to inherit and own land. In this scenario, women are empowered and knowledgeable about their rights. They are fully involved in governance activities.

SCENARIO 1. FORESTRY SECTOR GOVERNANCE PARADISE

This scenario envisions a corruption-free, well-funded and coordinated forestry sector that effectively involves all state and non-state stakeholders in forest tenure reform implementation, while properly allocating sufficient budgets to activities aimed at securing local communities’ forest tenure rights. This scenario sees:

- Increased funding for the forestry sector from government, donors, private sector and other innovative financing mechanisms.
- Good coordination between different sectors and government departments, all working towards attaining forest tenure security for local people.
- A responsible private sector that compensates for the environmental impact of their investments in an adequate and timely manner.
- Government support for Masindi District Biodiversity Fund and Tree Fund initiatives to increase forest cover.
- Existence of clear forest/land use policies, laws and plans, which are fully implemented and monitored.
- Recruitment of more forestry staff trained on forest tenure reform implementation, and particularly on working with communities.
- Registration of Private and Community Forests completed.
- Organized community groups managing forestry resources and sharing benefits equitably.
- Empowered women participating in decision-making and taking up 60% of leadership positions on local organizations and institutions working on forest tenure security issues.
- A supportive cultural institution actively working with other stakeholders to promote and secure tenure rights of local people.
SCENARIO 2. SUPPORTIVE PRIVATE SECTOR UNDER UNSUPPORTIVE PUBLIC SECTOR

This scenario envisions a responsible private sector (e.g. oil and gas extraction) willing to fund forest tenure reform implementation and cooperate with government, cultural leaders, local people and civil society, but whose actions are undermined by an unsupportive public sector, resulting in failure to realize forest tenure security. The scenario is characterized by:

- Industries undertaking deliberate actions to green the Albertine region through tree planting.
- Industries implementing socially and environmentally responsible policies including infrastructural development with minimal impacts on forests and communities, financing the government’s Tree Fund and creating local employment opportunities.
- Industries giving 30% of their revenues to communities to reduce pressure on the forests, contributing to sustainable forest management.
- Unsupportive public sector as evidenced by non-prioritization of forest sector, political interference, misappropriation of funds, change of land use allowing for forest-destructive uses, poor delivery of support services to communities for attaining forest tenure security, resulting in environmental degradation, forest destruction, and extinction of indigenous tree species.
- Limited community participation in planning and implementing forest tenure reform activities as a result of government failure to facilitate and empower participation.
- Supportive cultural institutions willing to work with other stakeholders to help secure local people’s forest tenure rights, but discouraged by government actions.

SCENARIO 3. BUSINESS-AS-USUAL - FOREST TENURE SECURITY AT RISK

This business-as-usual situation sees government developing and implementing policies that do not secure tenure rights of forest-dependent communities. Policies are developed and implemented without meaningful consultation with affected communities, NGOs, the private sector and other actors, and so fail to recognize community ownership of forests. Policies continue to exclude women and youth from forestry management and benefits. Forest conversion to commercial agriculture and mass-destruction of forests are commonplace. As a result:

- Communities continue to encroach and destroy forests for farmland and settlement expansion, and overharvest for firewood, building poles, timber, medicinal and other products.
- Government makes and implements new policies favouring large-scale, land-based investments in the district, particularly oil and gas extraction, leading to community land being reallocated to oil and gas companies and other investors.
- Local people are displaced from forested areas, losing their rights over forests.
- Unplanned changes in land-use systems see forests being cleared for sugarcane, tobacco, ranching, industrial and infrastructural development.
- Forest tenure reform implementation is led exclusively by the National Forest Authority (NFA), without coordination with the Forest Sector Support Department (FSSD) and lower-level actors such as District Forest Services (DFS), Private Forest Owners (PFOs), Communal Land Associations (CLAs), and Cultural Institutions (CIs).
- Donors and government reduce funding to forestry sector programs involving local people because it is a low priority area; there are no alternative financial resources to support forest tenure reform implementation.
- CIs are abolished, with government taking back control of all kingdom forests.
SCENARIO 4. GOVERNMENT FAILS BUT THE INVOLVEMENT OF WOMEN SAVES THE DAY

This scenario envisions a situation whereby failure by government and other forestry sector actors adversely and disproportionately affects the tenure rights of women and other marginalized groups in the district, prompting the women’s proactive intervention. This scenario sees:

- Uncoordinated laws and policies that do not account for local forest tenure or the need for secure tenure.
- NFA as the only agency mandated to manage forest resources, without input from responsible bodies like FSSD, DFS, PFOs, CLAs and Cls, leading to large-scale forest destruction.
- Limited forestry sector funding from donors and government, with mismanagement of meager financial resources by forest agencies.
- Existence of Cls supporting women’s inheritance and ownership of land.
- Empowered women who know their rights and roles in forest tenure reform implementation, with adequate management capabilities, become actively involved in forest governance.
- Supportive men from household to national level, who ensure that women’s rights and responsibilities in forest tenure issues are protected.

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<tr>
<th>Table 2. Proposed actions for promoting forest tenure security in Masindi district, Uganda.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>DRIVING FORCE</strong></td>
</tr>
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</table>
| Role of government agencies | Making local government agencies more responsive to community interests by: | Chief Administrative Office  
District Forest Office  
Community Development Office  
Sub County Chiefs |
|  | • Training local government agents on their roles in forest tenure reform implementation, particularly how to effectively serve communities | District Forest Office Community Development Office  
Sub County Chiefs |
|  | • Empower communities to demand accountability by raising awareness of their rights and roles in forest tenure reform implementation | Non-Government Organizations (NGOs)  
Community Development Office |
|  | • Popularize policies and laws related to forest / land tenure reforms and the rights of local communities, by developing and disseminating public-friendly versions, using print and electronic media | District Forest Office Community Development Office  
NGOs  
Sub County Chiefs |
| Access to financial resources | 1. Human and financial resource mobilization: | District Natural Resources Office  
District Forest Office  
District Council  
NGOs |
|  | • Lobbying for increased government budget allocation towards forest tenure reform, particularly reforms that recognize forest-dependent communities’ rights | District Council  
NGOs |
|  | 2. Operationalize alternative funding sources to support forest tenure reform implementation including: | District Planning Office  
District Natural Resources Office  
District Forest Office  
National Environment Management Authority (NEMA)  
NGOs |
|  | • The Tree Fund and Masindi Biodiversity Conservation Fund | District Forest Office  
National Environment Management Authority (NEMA) |
|  | • Payment for ecosystem service schemes | NGOs |
|  | • Polluter-pays principle, whereby all investors will be required to compensate for their pollution | District Council  
District Finance Department |
|  | 3. Institute a requirement that private investors remit a certain percentage of revenues to support communities and the forestry sector in the district | District Council  
District Finance Department |
| Roles and effects of oil, gas and other industries | • Promote more environmentally responsible investments in the district, including establishing a tree-planting policy for industries | District Council  
Chief Administrative Office  
District Commercial Office (NEMA)  
District Environment Office |
|  | • Promote public-private partnerships for supporting tenure reform implementation | District Environment Office  
District Council |
|  | • Carry out Environmental Impact Assessments (EIAs) before infrastructural development | District Environment Office |
| Community participation in forest management (including women) | • Empower communities to demand accountability | District Non-Government Forum Community Development Office  
District Forest Office  
Community Development Office  
NGOs |
|  | • Involve communities in local government (planning process, petitions speaker) | NGOs |
|  | • Involve the whole community, including women and young people, in forest management | NGOs |
|  | • Empower women and young people to take up leadership positions at community and lower government levels with regards to tenure reform implementation | NGOs |
| Cultural institutions, norms and beliefs | Sensitize community to ignore outdated cultural norms, such as barring women from inheriting land and trees, and encourage the community to embrace modernity | Bunyoro Kingdom  
District Community Development office  
NGOs |
Finally, the scenarios seem to point to the necessity of involving multiple actors at different levels of governance, as well as community and cultural institutions, in order for local community rights to be secure. Indeed, they indicate that recentralization and vesting authority in one actor, while excluding others, is likely to result in negative outcomes.

Action plan

Participants in the PPA exercise proposed, debated and decided on action plans that would advance the desired scenarios and mitigate the undesired scenario. The strategies presented are organized in Table 2, and correspond to key driving forces impacting local forest tenure security. The proposed action plans include specific actions, as well as the people or organizations responsible for implementation. Table 3 presents the actions proposed by the women at the women-only PPA workshop.

Conclusion

The Participatory Prospective Analysis process brought together multiple stakeholders to consider the future forest tenure security of local communities in Masindi district, resulting in an action plan to tackle identified driving forces over the next ten years.

Stakeholders identified a number of threats to forest tenure rights, including the uncontrolled expansion of the oil and gas sector and other industries (sugarcane and ethanol). Inadequate financial resources for the forestry sector and a lack of community involvement in forest management (particularly that of women) were highlighted as signs of limited governmental effectiveness. Lastly, it was noted that cultural institutions can have significant influence in ensuring tenure security, when cultural norms and beliefs are respected.

Stakeholders devised responses to these challenges. Among them: making local government agencies more responsive to community interests; mobilizing human and financial resources; promoting more environmentally-friendly investments; strengthening community participation in forest management through involvement in activity planning, implementation and monitoring, as well as law enforcement; and encouraging the participation of women and cultural institutions.

Stakeholders proposed to integrate actions into the District Development Plan and use this to source funding for implementation, while regular activities, such as raising community awareness of forest tenure rights, would be undertaken by both government and non-government agencies. Community differentiation dictates that special attention is paid to women's tenure rights, and cultural institutions have a key role to play in this. Multi-actor collaboration and cooperation, rather than centralized, exclusive mandates, are essential to securing local tenure rights.

Acknowledgments

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Table 3. In addition to the collectively-agreed action plans above, those below resulted from the women-only PPA workshop

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<tr>
<th>DRIVING FORCE</th>
<th>PROPOSED ACTIONS</th>
<th>RESPONSIBLE AGENCY</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Supportive men and domestic</td>
<td>• Sensitize men on the benefits and value of supporting women in forest ownership</td>
<td>District Community Development Office</td>
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<tr>
<td>relationships</td>
<td>• Encourage increased male participation in securing women’s tenure rights</td>
<td>District Forest Office</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Encourage good relationships in homes and between relatives (clans) with help</td>
<td>Religious and cultural leaders</td>
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<td></td>
<td>of religious and cultural leaders</td>
<td>District/Sub County Community Development Office</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Encourage mixed-gender village development groups and also recognize model</td>
<td>NGOs and CBOs</td>
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<td></td>
<td>homes and family projects</td>
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<td>Technical skills for women</td>
<td>• Equip more women with natural resources management skills e.g. training on</td>
<td>District Forest Officer</td>
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<td></td>
<td>tree nursery establishment and management, planting of trees and sustainable use</td>
<td>NGOs</td>
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<td></td>
<td>of forests. Make forest and conservation training institutions and schools more</td>
<td>Forestry training institutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>gender sensitive</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Access to finance</td>
<td>• Sensitize and raise awareness of women to form savings credit groups. Encourage</td>
<td>District Community Development (Gender) Office</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>NGOs to support women in forestry management</td>
<td>NGOs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Access to land</td>
<td>• Establish a lobbying platform for women to own parental land</td>
<td>District Community Development (Gender) Office</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Government institutions at parish, sub-county and district level to allocate</td>
<td>NGOs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>plots to women by communities</td>
<td>Local councils at all levels</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• NFA to give women plots to plant boundary trees</td>
<td>National Forest Authority</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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