



NATIONAL ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY

NES high level dialogue on management of fragile ecosystems in the Rangelands



HIGH LEVEL DIALOGUE ON MANAGEMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES IN THE RANGELANDS

"Tapping into the Enormous Potential of Rangelands to contribute to Food Security and National Development "



VENUE: Virtual

28th Sept. 2021

10:00 AM - 01:00 PM Nairobi



Meeting ID: 864 6278 6409



VENUE: Zoom

Report	Signature	Designation	Date
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DATE: 28th. Sept. 2021

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1.0 Executive Summary

On 28th September, 2021, FRA under the Thematic group on Natural Resource Management under the NES organized a high level dialogue on natural resource management in the rangelands. The event was held virtually and brought together 50 (28M,22F) stakeholders including officials from MAAIF, Ministry of Water and Environment, NEMA, NPA, District Local Governments, Civil Society, Media, academia and farmers from rangeland communities, youths among others. The meeting aimed at fostering discussions among actors at local and national level on how to harness and tap into the enormous potential of the rangelands to contribute to food security and national development. Specifically, the dialogue created a platform for multi stakeholders to share experiences in regard to management of fragile ecosystems in the rangelands, build relationships to aid collective planning and decision making.

This activity contributes towards the project outcome of “Enhanced governance systems of natural resources in rangeland through organizing voices of rangeland communities to competently shape decision making on natural resource management for improved livelihoods.”

As a result, awareness was created on the need to conserve rangeland resources for the role those ecosystems play towards Uganda’s economy; and some key recommendations were raised including strengthening natural resource management structures; the need to deliberate efforts to increase and support the participation of rangeland communities in public decision making; among others. These among others were to be documented into an outcome paper for advocacy purposes during CSO engagements with various policy makers for adoption to inform policy change.

2.0 MEAL Summary

2.1 Activity Participation

Total Number of Participants:			Below 35 Years:	35	
Female:	22	Male:	28	PWDs:	N/A

2.2 Activity Objectives

Broad objective	To foster discussions among actors at local and national level on how to harness and tap into the enormous potential of the rangelands to contribute to food security and national development.
Specific objectives	Create a platform for multi stakeholders to reflect on the current issues affecting rangeland communities in regard to management of fragile ecosystems. Identify and purpose priority actions and strategies that need to be undertaken for effective implementation of policies that aim at enhancing management of rangeland resources in Uganda.

2.3 Report against activity objectives

In line with the activity objectives, information and knowledge was shared with stakeholders both state and non-state especially on the key issues related to management of natural resources in the rangelands; discussion on the existing legal and policy framework and how it determines decisions, actions, productivity, access to natural resources; key issues affecting management of natural resources, and challenges related to governance of those resources were identified and shared together with interventions to address the existing them.

During his presentation, Dr Anthony Egeru who was the key speaker during the dialogue, highlighted key strategic areas such as the importance of rangelands, challenges and way forward aimed at guiding the conversations on the management of natural resources in the rangelands.

Within the context of Uganda, Dr Egeru highlighted that rangelands are important in feeding the growing population in Uganda and are integral for ecosystem services including conservation and tourism which brings over 1.6 billion USD. There is need to invest in rangelands to reduce disparities, research in total rangeland value contributions and restoration.

The perspective is that many of the stakeholders do not have a background on natural resource management. He gave a description of the rangelands that they are grassland ecosystems often with trees that are grazed or have the potential to be grazed by livestock and wildlife. He noted that the global importance of rangelands cannot be ignored basing on the fact that they cover over 54% of global terrestrial surface. He noted that rangelands represent the frontiers for greater conflict as rapid transitions happen in use, ownership, management and resource value changes.

However, rangelands across Uganda & the region experience multiple interacting challenges as there is a perfect storm of challenges forming such as climate change, food crisis, land degradation, population explosion, energy crisis among others resulting from mismanagement of natural resources in the rangelands.

The country is in great risk because rangelands have the highest population growth patterns which is a telling factor that these areas are the frontiers of expansion for agriculture and other means of livelihood attainment. In the current context, most areas in the rangelands are where food insecurity occurs both hidden and physical food insecurity. In addition, drought is a common recurring issue that for long not been addressed where most of the dryland areas have not been able to sustain majority of the population due lack various crises.

Within the concept of livestock, there are specific challenges that need to be addressed especially poverty trends that has limited a number of people in the rangelands from benefiting or reaping from their livestock despite it being the most adaptive system in the rangelands because it is more resilient to the long dry spells experienced in the rangelands.

During the dialogue, there was a panel of experts which consisted of Mr. Denis Mulongo Maholo from the Department of animal Production, Ministry of Agriculture Animal industry and Fisheries (MAAIF); Ms. Lucy Iyango, Assistant Commissioner, Wetlands Management Department Ministry of Water and Environment (MWE); Dr Denis Mpairwe, Associate Professor - School of Agricultural Sciences, Dept. of Agricultural Production, Makerere University (MAK). These panelists shared their diverse experiences and proposals in line with the topic that can be adopted by responsible policy makers to enhance sustainable management of natural resources in the rangelands.

PANELIST ONE: Mr. Denis Mulongo Maholo from the Department of animal Production, Ministry of Agriculture Animal industry and Fisheries (MAAIF)

In response to the question as to why the National Rangeland Policy has taken long without being approved and implemented, Denis responded that the Policy is with Cabinet for review and might be sent back for revision and there is need to change the strategic areas to ensure it is aligned to the NDP III. He noted that it has delayed with Cabinet for 2 years and due to COVID 19, the Cabinet priorities have changed the conversations have been affected as the pandemic has dominated many engagements since they were initiated.

In line the plans and programs that MAAIF has towards building resilience of rangeland communities as far as management of natural resources is concerned, he noted that in order to join the national development

agenda at large, MAAIF has a number of strategic areas it is focusing on such as enhancing management of natural resources in the rangelands such as water and forage which goes beyond production but also access and government is strengthening management of the buffers; enhancing water for agricultural production through partnering with private sector, development partners and NGOs to undertake different water for agricultural interventions in the rangelands though the ministry is limited by its mandates; rehabilitating the degraded areas to minimise the current challenges and more so building the capacity of the communities can be able to negotiate and manage their natural resources through trainings and in order to develop the different value chains such as apiary, fisheries, livestock among others.

PANELIST TWO: Ms. Lucy Iyango, Assistant Commissioner, Wetlands Management Department Ministry of Water and Environment (MWE)

In her presentation, Lucy provided an update on what the Department of Wetlands under the Ministry of Water and Environment has done to address this issue. She also highlighted the opportunities that rangeland communities can utilize to ensure sustainable management of fragile ecosystems for improved livelihoods.

She noted that wetlands cover about 26,600 km² of Uganda's total land area of 241,500 km² including water bodies. Wetland resources represent one of the country's vital ecological and economic natural resources. Most people especially in rangeland communities are engaged in livestock production which entirely depends on natural resources such as wetlands. As a result, wetlands have been degenerated due to pressure from human activities areas such as overgrazing, soil erosion and competition of water resources for socio-economic benefits. Lucy noted that overdependence on wetlands is associated with poverty and extreme climate change impacts and thus there is need to conserve and sustainably manage them.

Currently, the Ministry of Water and Environment is looking at sustainability of water resources and it has undertaken demarcation and restoration of wetlands where over 20,000 hectares have been restored countrywide and 4,000 hectares in the rangelands through working with the local governments in those areas. The Ministry has also developed Rangeland Management Plans through participatory engagements premised on maintaining food resource cover, water quality and quantity and reducing soil erosion, improved water management through establishment of dams to store water for home use and commercial purposes and also to foster agro pastoralism for food security. The Ministry has conducted sensitization programs focusing on high value animals instead of numbers to reduce of overgrazing, introduced among others. Lucy noted that all the interventions are aimed at enhancing resilience of the communities but also ensuring that ecosystems support their livelihoods.

Lucy highlighted some of the opportunities that can enhance sustainable management of fragile ecosystems for improved livelihoods in the rangelands. These include leveraging on innovative organic systems that focus on use of low inputs compared to use of chemicals that have long term impacts on soil fertility and indebtedness among marginalized small holder farmers.

She established that existence of CSOs whose expertise can contribute towards enhancing the capacity of rangeland communities in enterprise development and management for sustainable management of fragile ecosystems in the rangelands. In addition, Lucy said that the existence of vast lands that allow rotational grazing, crop rotation among others is one of the opportunities that rangeland communities can utilize to address misuse of wetlands. She highlighted that MWE has worked closely with other Ministries like MAAIF, MLHUD to consolidate efforts in supporting communities for example in promoting sustainable land management practices such as water harvesting technologies, valley tanks, dams among others as innovative approaches to enhance effective access to water for production.

Availability of vast livelihood programs that target on improving service delivery and access to social services in the local communities. These programs have strategies that promote community congregation and participation, establishment of groups for farmers, water user committees among others.

PANELIST THREE: Dr Denis Mpairwe, Associate Professor - School of Agricultural Sciences, Dept. of Agricultural Production, Makerere University (MAK)

In over 8 years, the government contracted Dr Denis to develop the National Rangeland Management and Pastoralism Policy. In his response, he highlighted what needs to be done in order to build resilience of rangeland communities in the wake of climate change; Comment on the inadequate documentation of rangeland resources which has affected proper planning and has escalated conflicts in those communities.

Dr Denis noted that the cardinal role of the rangelands that is no longer being respected is pastoralism which has for long sustained them as the main production system which has resulted into increasing conflicts for natural resources for other uses such as charcoal burning, farming which has resulted into vagaries of climate change. He noted that while they were developing the Policy, the team proposed the recognition and legitimate protection of pastoralism as provided for in the National Land Policy 2013 which recognizes Pastoralism as the best for the area. The proposals in the developed Rangeland Policy reflected that in case of any interventions in their area pastoralist would be part and partial in the planning and implementation process to mitigate climate change issues and mismanagement of the fragile ecosystems.

He noted that the new interventions introduced in the rangeland communities such as road construction, establishment of farms among others have resulted into change in climate, drought and water and feed shortage especially for animals.

There is need to recognize the needs of the rangeland communities and putting them at the forefront of implementing strategies that can address degradation of ecosystems. This requires developing capacities of the local people to educate them on the interventions that can enhance sustainable management of natural resources especially on sustainable land management practices.

There is also need to document and disseminate best practices in the rangelands to guide proper planning and implementation of interventions best suited for sustainable management of rangelands. He noted that there is limited information especially the biomass, resource mappings, total soil nutrients in the area when they were developing the Rangeland Policy. This limited the assessment of the species available that are in the rangelands and it is a challenge when it comes to planning and investment.

There is need for strengthening the capacity of local government structures, extension workers on land use mapping and farm planning to address the issue of poor farming practices especially in the dry season. In addition, there is need for government to work with these structures to strengthen invest in early warning systems through which information and early indicators are shared with the affected communities to mitigate risks.

In conclusion, the FRA Head of Programs, Jude Ssebuliba, thanked the resource persons for their technical support throughout the sessions and the NES Facilitator, thematic leads and participants. He noted that pastoralism is important for Uganda's economy looking at the statistic in terms of its contribution. Subsequently, a multi stakeholder approach can foster sustainable management of the ecosystems where they thrive as well as the practice of the pastoralists. He called upon all stakeholders to implement solutions that enhance protection of fragile ecosystems especially in the rangelands.

2.4 Report on Activity Outcomes

In line with the activity objectives, awareness was created on understanding the concept of rangelands and their socio economic contributions towards national development. Key priority actions and strategies that

need to be undertaken for effective management of rangeland resources in Uganda were documented for example increased investment in rangelands, fast tracking the National Rangeland Policy to guide the implementation of activities within the rangeland communities for sustainable management of natural resources.

b. Evidence of outcome from the activity

From the plenary, at least 75% of the participants had a clear understanding of the key issues surrounding natural resources in the rangelands, the different ecosystem management practices, the contribution of pastoralism to the national development of the country, knowledge of the different eco system management practices in the rangelands, challenges and areas for improvement to inform policy change.

Approximately, 15% had a fair understanding of the concepts after the meeting.

2.5 Report on Output indicators

Indicator No.	Output indicator	Activity Result
Number of men and women who are influencers and leaders have access to information on management of natural resources in the rangelands	50 stakeholders (22F:28M) had access to information on management of natural resources in the rangelands.	Enhancement of knowledge on management of fragile ecosystems in the rangelands. Identification of key strategic actions to inform policy change and sustainable use of natural resources in the rangelands.

3.0 Methodology

The meeting was physical and participatory led by Mr Denis Maholo as a contracted resource person to make a presentation and provide technical guidance during the in order to realize the set outcomes. Feedback/ assessment forms were developed against the participants’ expectations and used to capture information that was used to measure the achievement of the set objectives of the meeting.

4.0 Brief of Proceedings and Key Emerging Issues

Ms Agnes Kirabo, the Food Rights Alliance Executive Director in her opening remarks noted that if conversations are not conducted on how to manage rangeland resources that cover over half of the Uganda’s total land area, the national development trajectory is likely to be affected in various ways. There is need for conscious and regular discussions to that will inform decisions that will enhance national food security and improved livelihoods especially in the rangeland communities who entirely depend on natural resources for survival. Agnes added that 80% of the national livestock is owned in rangelands where 90% of the national cattle population providing 85% of the total milk produced and 95% of the meat produced in the country come from these areas. She noted that the more these resources are mismanaged the rangeland communities are likely to continue grappling with food insecurity issues, increased climate change and other natural resource related challenges.

Putting the issues of rangelands at the forefront of transforming our food systems and revamping our crippling economy is very vital to unleash the enormous potential of these communities to benefit from the increasing demand for animal products in the entire Africa that is currently the net importer of dairy products from Europe.

It should be noted that the rangelands have over 7 million people covering 44% of Uganda’s total land area. Most people depend on commonly held resources for their livelihoods and to sustain their socio-cultural identities. Thus, the government needs to consider rangeland communities in the National Development Plan and various programs to improve the wellbeing of this segment of society.

On a final note, Agnes called upon all members of the natural resource management to join efforts in such discussions in order to transform livelihoods, build resilience and equity among people in the rangeland

communities such that they are guaranteed with the human right to food. She thanked LEMU for hosting the NES platform, UCOBAC and other leads for technical support in the implementation process.

In line with awareness creation on the NES agenda in Uganda, Ms Doreen Kobusingye the current NES Facilitator in Uganda noted that NES Uganda is a platform of the ILC in 17 different African countries and it involves both Government and Non State Actors in its implementation. She noted that NES brings together various local and international organisations, private sector and research institutions working on land and natural resource governance in the country. Dr Doreen mentioned that the purposed of the NES is to promote people centred land governance through policy, practice change and adherence to the Vision 2040. She presented the respective thematic areas through which the NES project is being implemented among them is the Natural Resource Management Thematic area which is led by Food Rights Alliance together with CESCRA. She commended FRA for collaboratively implementing the thematic group activities together with other members as per the NES Strategy.

She established that NES in Uganda has three objectives of CONNECT, MOBILISE and INFLUENCE. Briefly these mean as follows;

- **CONNECT:** A competent platform of individuals and institutions working collaboratively to address land governance challenges in Uganda. Vibrant Platform accountable to members and stakeholders.
- **MOBILISE:** A vibrant national multi-stakeholder platform sharing knowledge and skills on land governance. NES members equipped with adequate skills to implement and support implementation of
- **INFLUENCE:** Strong implementation of land laws and policies that are gender sensitive

The NES Strategy in Uganda is implemented through 4 thematic Groups aligned along ILC commitments (10) e.g. Secure Tenure Rights, Equal Land Rights for Women. These thematic groups include;

THEMATIC AREA	THEMATIC LEAD
Land Governance	LANDnet Uganda
Gender, Land and Vulnerable Groups	Uganda Community Based Association for Child Welfare (UCOBAC)
Land and Investment	Saferworld
Natural Resources Management	Food Rights Alliance (FRA)
Land Rights Defenders	Witness Radio.org

She noted that NES platform has a strong governance structure which is consisted of the NES Chairperson, UCOBAC, the NES Host - LEMU, NES Steering committee composed of the thematic leads to oversee the impenetation of NES activities and finally the NES Facilitator whose role is to coordinate the all activities undertaken by the thematic leads.

Dr Doreen guided the stakeholders on how to join NES through sending an expression of interest to the NES Uganda chairperson, UCOBAC by email with the relevant information such as the profile of the applicant, letter of intent detailing the areas of interest, contributions to be made by the applicant towards promoting NES agenda in Uganda.

5.0 Recommendations

Basing on the meeting discussions and presentations made, participants submitted a number of recommendations as highlighted below:

1. There is need to recognize the needs of the rangeland communities and putting them at the forefront of implementing strategies that can address degradation of ecosystems. This requires developing capacities of the local people to educate them on the interventions that can enhance sustainable management of natural resources especially on sustainable land management practices.
2. There is also need to document and disseminate best practices in the rangelands to guide proper planning and implementation of interventions best suited for sustainable management of rangelands. He noted that there is limited information especially the biomass, resource mappings, total soil nutrients

in the area when they were developing the Rangeland Policy. This limited the assessment of the species available that are in the rangelands and it is a challenge when it comes to planning and investment.

3. There is need for strengthening the capacity of local government structures, extension workers on land use mapping and farm planning to address the issue of poor farming practices especially in the dry season. In addition, there is need for government to work with these structures to strengthen invest in early warning systems through which information and early indicators are shared with the affected communities to mitigate risks.
4. Need for continued awareness to enhance in mindset change of the communities in the rangelands especially on activities that lead to degradation of fragile ecosystems.

6.0 Plan of Action / Way forward

FRA to follow up with MAAIF and other responsible actors on the fast tracking of the National Rangeland Policy through various engagements.

FRA to consolidate issues highlighted in the meeting to inform the discussions in the next engagements.

7.0 Lessons Learned

- There is need to engage rangeland communities in the range development process because they are directly engaged in the management of natural resources in the rangelands.
- There is need for continued capacity building of the local communities in the rangelands and other stakeholders through information dissemination, creating space for engagement to create awareness on management of natural resources.
- Enhancing people centered land governance will promote sustainable protection of valuable assets in rangelands especially if they are involved in the planning, decision making and implementation processes.

8.0 Conclusion

The current management practices have escalated the degradation of fragile ecosystems in the rangelands despite the different policy frameworks put in place by the government. It should be noted that Uganda as of now has no specific governance framework is available despite an oversight on rangeland provided through a multi sectoral approach (Agriculture, Water and Environment and Lands). It is worrying that as harmful effects of climate change are increasing impacting on crop and livestock productivity due to water shortage, the issue of land grabbing is raising fears of many in the rangelands. This puts natural resources at risk for the sake of investments by private companies in the rangelands. It is thus important that the National Rangeland Policy is fast tracked and implemented to guide interventions that will not only protect the rights of the vulnerable people in the rangelands but also enhance sustainable management of natural resources from risks to meet the diverse needs of the different stakeholders.

9.0 Annexes

High Level Dialogue Articles

<https://shiftmedianews.com/discussion-high-level-dialogue-on-management-of-fragile-ecosystems-in-rangelands-opens/>

<https://ugandaradionetwork.net/a/story.php?storyId=186749>

High Level Dialogue Zoom Link

https://us02web.zoom.us/rec/share/mIA3zICyFilguRjTb57hlnXF03Q1SRz7H5L_yw2HoMtQurjm_ywPM Sqz3J7TKuhY.IOXbKy7W8M68AC5j Passcode: 5LofA3+f