Socio-economic Activities Impacting on Rwizi Riverine Wetlands, South Western Uganda

By
Creatoris Bashemereirwe
2009

Supervisor
Julius Bunny Lejju (PhD), Department of Biology, MUST

Abstract
In Uganda wetlands are being rapidly converted for development purposes. Anthropogenic activities are main agents of degrading wetlands. Different wetlands have different anthropogenic activities affecting them. The aim of the study was to identify anthropogenic activities in Rwizi riverine wetlands and examine the level of impact of these activities on sustainable utilization of Rwizi riverine wetland resource. Quantitative and qualitative methods were used for study. Formal methods included self-administered, semi-structured questionnaire, interview, observation and focus group discussions, while informal methods included oral histories. Data was analysed using SPSS version 10.

People in Rwizi Riverine wetland catchment’s areas depend largely on Rwizi riverine wetland goods and services. They have been engaged in a wide range of environmental based economic activities. The major socio-economic activities being farming—both fish and agriculture farming (84.1%) and least activity being craft making (4.3%). This is mainly because of high levels of poverty and illiteracy of people in catchment areas. The majority of resource users and community members (46.3%), earn less than Ug Shs 1000/= per day while the highest earners (Ug Shs 2000-5000 per day) constituted the least population (8.4%). The majority of policy makers (41.0%), earned Ug Shs 1000<2000/= per day while the highest earners (>5000 Ug Shs) formed the least population (6.6%).

Socio-economic activities effects on wetland were more pronounced in lower zone (96.7%) of river course followed by upper zone (94.7%) of river course and least in the middle zone (87.5%) of river course. The impacts of socio-economic activities on River Rwizi as reported by respondents were; 36.4% reported occurrence of diseases, 28.0% reported changes in drought and periodic flooding cycles, while 26.6% reported changes in water quality and quantity. With reference point to 2002 and 1998, when Mbarara and Bushenyi wetland inventories were done respectively, currently approximately 62.2% of the wetlands have been completely destroyed.

With current level of wetland degradation, locally targeted economic incentives are important. Some of these benefits may be of social or cultural value. Conservation actions at particular wetlands should be looked into two aspects; ecological aspects and human activities. A suitable strategy towards wise use of wetland resources is crucial putting in consideration interests of all stakeholders involved in wetland sustainable utilization.