Formulation of Conflict Redress Mechanisms for Itohya Forest, Kikuube District

Executive Summary

This report explores the extent of conflicts and the development process of a conflict redress mechanism for Itohya Forest, located in Kikuube District. Managed by St. Joseph Vocational Institute, the forest faces significant challenges related to human-wildlife conflict, human-related conflicts, and policy-related conflicts. These conflicts arise due to the increasing pressure on forest resources, habitat encroachment, and competing land-use interests. This report outlines the sources of conflict, the engagement strategies with local communities, and actionable steps to mitigate and resolve conflicts, ensuring a sustainable balance between wildlife conservation and community needs. These include, among others:

1. Wildlife from Itohya Forest often stray into nearby human settlements, causing the destruction of crops, livestock loss, and threats to human safety. Encroachment into wildlife habitats and competition for natural resources exacerbates these tensions.

2. The growing demand for forest land and resources has led to conflicts among local communities, managers of the forest, and government institutions, including the Local Government of Kikube district. Key resources harvested include poles, timber, charcoal burning, and medicinal plants since most of the forested areas are depleted in the agricultural landscapes. Therefore, there are disagreements between community members and forest managers over forest products exploitation and management.

3. The lack of formal governance structures, and lack of funding for enforcement and internal policy for forest management fuel the conflict. The role of St. Joseph Vocational Institute as the primary manager of the forest raises questions of authority and enforcement, particularly in balancing conservation goals with community needs.

To address the ongoing conflicts, the report recommends the implementation of a structured conflict redress mechanism with the following components:

1. Establishing a multi-stakeholder platform, called the Conflict Resolution Committee (CRC), that includes local communities, the managers of the forest, NGO/CSO conservation organizations, and local government officials to foster open dialogue, mediate disputes, explore alternative livelihood options, and ensure collaborative decision-making.

2. Defining and establishing forest use regulations that balance conservation with sustainable livelihood activities, which should have agreements on access to forest resources utilization.

3. Increasing awareness among local communities and school-going adolescents and children about the importance of forest conservation, the income streams arising from having the forest in the vicinity, their roles in preventing human-wildlife conflicts, and the legal outcomes of illegal activities.

4. Developing alternative livelihood programs to reduce dependence on forest resources, such as promoting community tree planting and agroforestry, eco-tourism, agro-ecology and agro-tourism, and other sustainable practices (like briquette making as a substitute charcoal burning), that benefit both the environment and the local economy.

5. Establishing a formal conflict resolution framework, which includes mechanisms for reporting, addressing grievances, and monitoring conflict resolution outcomes. This system should involve local councils, the leadership of the technical institute, the catholic church leadership, the local government, the internal security agencies with the district local government (Gombalola Internal Security Organs and the District Internal Security Organs), and central government representatives (including Uganda Wildlife Authority among others).

Itohya Forest holds significant ecological, social, and environmental value for Kikuube District. However, unresolved human-wildlife, human-related, and policy grievances and conflicts pose a threat to its sustainability. By implementing a well-structured redress mechanism, the stakeholders will not only mitigate these grievances and conflicts but also foster a collaborative approach to forest conservation and management that ensures the long-term well-being of both the forest ecosystem and the surrounding communities. The involvement of all key actors, along with clear policies and community education, will be critical to the success of this initiative.

Background

Itohya Forest, located in Kikuube District, managed by St. Joseph Vocational Insitute and the Catholic Diocese of Hoima, is a biologically diverse area with wildlife species such as chimpanzees, vervet monkeys, red-tailed monkeys, Black & white colobus, grey-cheeked mangabey and olive baboon and various species of small mammals.

The forest is composed of bamboo and several Indigenous tree species such as *Albizia coriaria* (Mugavu), *Ficus natalensis* (Fig tree), *Milicia excelsa* (Mvule), *Markhamia lutea* (Musambya), *Maesopsis eminii* (Musizi), *Terminalia superba* (Umbrella Tree), *Khaya anthotheca* (African Mahogany), *Khaya senegalensis* (Mahogany), *Prunus africana* (Red Stinkwood), *Warburgia ugandensis*

(Uganda Greenheart), *Entandrophragma cylindricum* (Sapele), *Antiaris toxicaria* (False Iroko), and *Pinus caribaea* among other species, which are home to biodiversity, are important for carbon sequestration, and provide various ecosystem services, including timber, woody products, medicinal use, and habitat for wildlife.

However, the presence of wildlife, coupled with the community's dependency on forest resources (since their forest resources have been cleared for agriculture and settlement over the years) has led to growing conflicts. These conflicts include wildlife raiding crops and illegal forest and non-timber resource extraction among others.

Figure 1: Tree species, young and old, in Itohya Forest

To ensure the **peaceful coexistence** of the Itohya forest management and local communities, while also protecting the wildlife and biodiversity of Itohya Forest, a structured conflict resolution process is essential to reduce and resolve conflicts between wildlife and humans (crop and property damage). The focus will be on the mechanism to mitigate the ongoing conflicts arising from wildlife raiding crops and damaging property. Chimpanzees, Vervet monkeys, Red-tailed monkeys, Black & white Colobus, Grey-checked Mangabey, and Olive Baboons are responsible for destroying farmland, leading to financial losses for local farmers. This creates animosity between the community and wildlife, sometimes resulting in retaliatory actions like illegal hunting/poisoning or even killing wildlife animals. Secondly, the redress mechanism will address human conflicts stemming from resource extraction within Itohya Forest. The aim is to tackle disputes related to the illegal extraction of forest resources, including timber extraction, firewood collection, removal of plants of medicinal importance, and hunting among other illegalities.

The high demand for forest resources for domestic use and income generation has led to conflict with forest managers and conservation efforts. Thirdly, the conflict redress mechanism will engage local communities in co-management and sustainable resource use. This is aimed at promoting collaboration between forest management authorities and local communities, ensuring that community members are active participants in decision-making processes related to forest management and conservation efforts. Lastly, the conflict redress mechanism will **build capacity for long-term conservation while supporting livelihoods. The aim is to** enhance the ability of local communities to contribute to conservation while ensuring that their livelihoods are safeguarded, reducing reliance on forest exploitation for income.

Overall, the conflict redress mechanism for Itohya Forest seeks to balance the needs of the local community with the demands of conservation, promoting **sustainable livelihoods** and reducing tensions between humans and wildlife. Through **community engagement**, **education**, and the creation of **alternative income-generating activities**, the mechanism ensures that both **wildlife** and **human communities** thrive together.

About Itoya Forest

Itohya Forest is a natural forest measuring about 800 acres (about 323.8 hectares) located along the Hoima – Kagadi road in the Kikuube District. It is managed by St. Joseph Vocational Institute, Munteme, which is in turn managed by the Catholic Church, Hoima Diocese. It is a significant ecological asset for the surrounding communities and wildlife. The forest is home to various species of animals, including chimpanzees, olive baboons, various types of monkeys such as Vervet, Red-tailed monkeys, and Grey-cheeked Mangabeys, and various flora and small mammals, making it a vital habitat for biodiversity. However, the presence of wildlife often leads to human-wildlife conflicts due to crop raiding and property damage by animals.

The forest is surrounded by 10 villages, including among others, Kinywambeho, Rwobuhuka, Munteme, Kiryatete, Kajoga,

Kiduubi, Kikyompyo, Kisambya, Kaigo, Rwengabi and Kihaguzi villages.

These villages depend on its resources for livelihoods, including firewood, charcoal, timber, medicinal trees, rattan, and poles among others. This dependence has led to human conflicts, such as disputes over land use, settlement, illegal resource extraction (e.g., poles, medicinal plants, and occasionally logging and charcoal production), and entries into the forest without granted permission (or trespassing). In addition to the biodiversity and resource challenges, Itohya Forest plays an important role in local efforts to conserve the environment, and primates and combat climate change. The management of St. Joseph Vocational Institute, together with the Catholic Church, works with the local communities, the government, and NGOs to promote sustainable forest management, conflict resolution, and alternative livelihoods.

Figure 2: Location of Itohya Forest

The managers of Itohya currently have a Memoranda of Understanding (MoU) with the Ecological Trends Alliance (on various aspects of forestry management, fire management, livelihoods, and general environment management), Chimpanzee Trust (to monitor the behavior of Chimpanzees), and Friends of TECO (who are volunteers) to manage the forest resource.

Efforts are currently underway to create a conflict redress mechanism to address both human-wildlife conflicts, human-related disputes over resources, and issues relating to policy and governance challenges. These efforts include collaboration between the forest management team, local government, CSOs in environment and natural resources management, and community leaders to foster peaceful coexistence and ensure the sustainable use of forest resources.

1.1   Current legal access/user rights for communities around Itohya Forest.

The current legal access and user rights for communities around Itohya Forest, which is privately owned, are influenced by national laws, local policies, and agreements between the private owners (St. Joseph Catholic Church) and the surrounding communities. These frameworks often create ambiguities and challenges that can exacerbate resource-based conflicts.

As a privately-owned forest, access rights are typically governed by agreements set by the owner. Communities do not have automatic legal rights to utilize resources from the forest unless explicitly granted by the owner. The owners restrict access to resources such as firewood, grazing land, water, or medicinal plants, particularly if such activities are seen as damaging to the forest or conflicting with their intended use.

Many local communities feel entitled to access the forest based on the fact that it is owned by the church, on historical use, or customary rights, especially if they rely on it for livelihoods. Such customary claims often clash with the formal ownership rights of St. Joseph Catholic Church, creating tensions and misunderstandings.

The National Forest and Tree Planting Act, of 2003, mandates that private forest owners manage their forests sustainably while recognizing community needs. The owner of a private forest should have a Forest Management Plan, spelling out the management regimes, while generating revenue. However, enforcement of this part of the law is often weak, and provisions for balancing private ownership and public interests remain unclear. Under the Land Act, of 1998, private landowners, including churches, have the right to exclude others from their land unless agreements specify otherwise. The Wildlife Act, of 2019 provides that if wildlife in the forest impacts communities, such as through crop destruction or attacks, communities invoke legal provisions for compensation or mitigation, though this process is often cumbersome.

The development of a **conflict redress mechanism** for **Itohya Forest**, was through consultations with the District Local Government (represented by the District Forest Officer, District Environment Officer, Production Officer, and Deputy Cheif Administrative Officer), the community leaders from the 5 adjacent villages surrounding Itohya Forest, members of the Friends of Itohya Community Conservation Associations (FICCA), Friends of Itohya Forest Club, Fiends of TECO, Chimpanzee Trust and the leadership of Itohya Forest (which at the same time, also serves as the leadership of St. Joseph Vocational Training Institute).

The Conflict Redress Mechanism is a strategic initiative designed to address a range of conflicts that affect both the forest ecosystem and the surrounding communities. These conflicts primarily stem from human-wildlife interactions, resource access issues, **and** policy-related grievances that have led to tension between local communities and forest managers.

The human-wildlife conflicts stem from the proximity of Itohya Forest to local communities which has led to frequent encounters between wildlife and humans, primarily due to **crop raids** by species like chimpanzees, baboons, and monkeys. These animals often leave the forest in search of food, targeting crops that local farmers depend on for their livelihoods. This creates **economic losses** for farmers and stirs resentment towards wildlife and forest conservation efforts. Therefore, the conflict redress mechanism will focus on **mitigating these conflicts** through various strategies, such as promoting the planting of **unpalatable crops** that primates and other wildlife are less likely to consume, introducing **beekeeping projects** around forest boundaries to deter wildlife, and establishing a **compensation fund** for farmers who suffer crop losses. By addressing these issues head-on, the mechanism will target to reduce crop damage and ease tensions between the community and the wildlife.

The second type of conflict is the human-related conflict, stemming from resource access. The community surrounding Itohya Forest relies on the forest for vital resources such as timber, poles, charcoal, rattan, and medicinal plants. However, overharvesting and unregulated extraction may cause resource depletion and environmental degradation, forcing forest managers to impose restrictions on forest access. This has sparked conflicts between the forest managers and the community, especially those who depend on forest resources for their daily needs or income.

The conflict redress mechanism will aim to balance resource access while promoting sustainable use of the forest. Co-management models will be introduced, where the community will be involved in decisions about forest use, ensuring that their voices are heard while also enforcing regulations to prevent overexploitation. In addition, alternative livelihoods such as planting trees together with other crops (agroforestry), poultry farming, and handicrafts will be promoted to reduce the community's dependency on forest resources. This will help alleviate the economic pressures driving unsustainable forest use while ensuring the long-term health of the forest.

The third type of conflict relates to policy, and the inability to resolve grievances. Policy conflicts arise when the forest managers, typically associated with St. Joseph Vocational Institute, are unable to resolve grievances amicably. The absence of clear dispute resolution channels, a lack of transparency in decision-making, and the exclusion of local communities from key management decisions have exacerbated tensions. This has led to distrust between forest managers and local communities, with many feeling their concerns are overlooked or unresolved. Therefore the redress mechanism will address these policy conflicts by establishing a transparent grievance resolution process that includes regular community consultations and stakeholder dialogues. A Conflict Resolution Committee (CRC) will be formed, consisting of community representatives, forest managers, and external mediators, to ensure that all grievances are handled fairly and efficiently. This committee will serve as a bridge between the community and forest authorities, fostering mutual trust and collaboration. Furthermore, there will be a push for clear communication of policies and management decisions, ensuring that all stakeholders are informed and can contribute to the planning process.

Objectives of the Conflict Redress Mechanism

The primary objectives of the proposed conflict redress mechanism for Itohya Forest are:

1. To reduce and resolve conflicts between wildlife (chimpanzees, baboons, monkeys, small rodents, and small mammals) and humans, particularly crop and property damage.
2. To address human conflicts stemming from resource extraction from within Itohya Forest.
3. To engage local communities in co-management and sustainable resource use, fostering ownership of conservation efforts.
4. To build capacity for long-term conservation while supporting the livelihoods of adjacent communities.

Definition of conflict in the context of a conflict redress mechanism designed for Itohya Forest

The Concise Oxford English Dictionary defines conflict as a state of opposition or hostilities, a fight or a struggle, or a clashing of opposed principles (COED, 2011). Young et al., 2010, define conflict as the consequence (positive or negative) of an interaction between humans, human activities, and wildlife. In the context of a conflict redress mechanism for Itohya Forest, conflict refers to the disagreements, disputes, or tensions that arise between different stakeholders, such as local communities, forest managers, and wildlife, over the use, management, and access to forest resources.

These conflicts can take several forms. **Human-wildlife conflicts** occur when wildlife, such as chimpanzees, baboons, and monkeys, damage crops or property, leading to damage and economic losses and creating friction between communities and conservation efforts. **Human-related conflicts** involve disputes between local communities and forest managers over the extraction of resources (e.g., timber, poles, medicinal plants), illegal activities (e.g., charcoal burning, logging of timber), and land use rights. **Policy grievances and conflicts** arise when there is a lack of clarity or fairness in the implementation of policies governing the forest. These kinds of conflicts occur due to poor communication, unresolved grievances, or disagreements over land boundaries, ownership, or management decisions.

In this context, conflict emphasizes the need for a structured resolution process to address these issues in a way that balances conservation objectives with the needs of local communities, ensuring sustainable management of the forest while minimizing tensions.

Sources of Conflict in Itoya Forest

The key sources of conflicts in Itohya Forest arise from wildlife from the forest that strays into nearby human settlements, causing the destruction of crops, livestock loss, and threats to human safety, and in turn, causing financial losses as a result. Secondly, there is a growing demand for forest land and access to forest resources that leads to rising conflicts among local communities, managers of the forest, and central or local government institutions, as people struggle to get livelihoods from poles, timber, charcoal burning, and medicinal plants since forests have been depleted from agricultural landscapes. Thirdly, Itohya Forest lacks formal governance structures and lacks funding for enforcement and internal policy for forest management. In Itohya forest, some interventions aim to reduce conflict between wildlife, the people, and their property. At the same time, there are indirect interventions that raise human tolerance for wildlife. Details of these conflicts are discussed here in sections that follow but also illustrated in Figure 3 below.
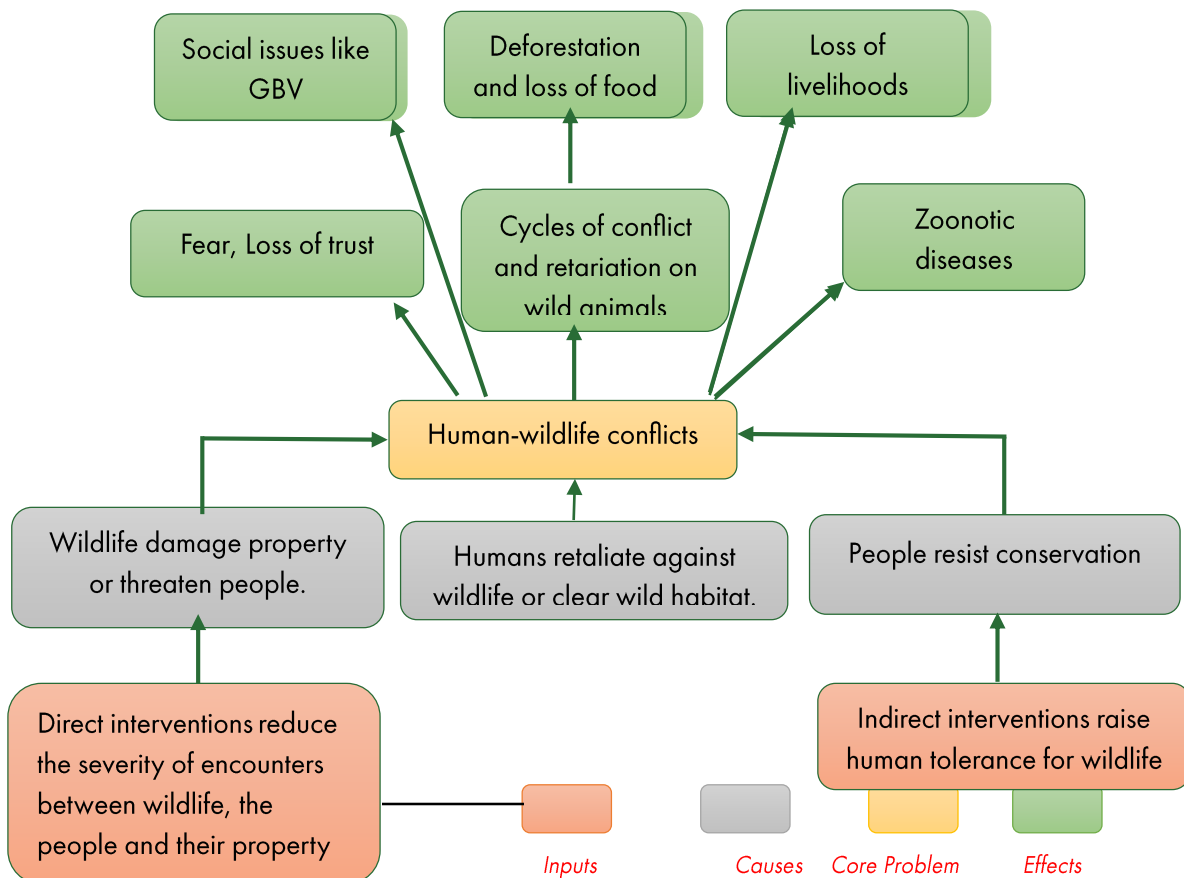
Source: Treves et al (2009)

Figure 1: Cause-and-effect relationships underlying human-wildlife conflicts and their associated interventions.

5.1 Human-wildlife conflicts in Itohya Forest

Human-wildlife conflicts in Itohya Forest are becoming a growing concern as human activities expand into previously undisturbed areas. The forest, managed by St. Joseph Vocational Institute is home to various wildlife species, including chimpanzees, baboons, monkeys, and other small mammals, which occasionally come into contact with nearby human communities. These interactions often result in wildlife raiding crops, attacking livestock, and causing damage to property while foraging for food. Though attacks on humans, particularly women and children, are rare, they pose a serious threat when they occur, raising safety concerns. Wildlife movements between forest habitats, such as Bugoma and Wambabya, increase the chances of conflict as animals traverse human-inhabited areas. In addition, these interactions create potential health risks, including the transmission of zoonotic diseases like *brucellosis* and *rabies*. Deforestation, encroachment, and habitat fragmentation further exacerbate these conflicts by reducing wildlife's natural habitat. The fear and anxiety caused by wildlife encounters, especially with species like chimpanzees, impact the well-being of local communities. Effective management strategies are needed to mitigate these conflicts and ensure both human safety and wildlife conservation. Addressing these challenges requires a multi-stakeholder approach, balancing the needs of the local population with conservation efforts.

5.1.1 Crop raiding:

Wildlife, particularly chimpanzees (*Pan troglodytes*), olive baboons (*Papio anubis*), monkeys, small rodents, and small mammals frequently raid crops (banana, cocoa, coffee, ground nuts, and sugar cane to feed on them) in adjacent farms, leading to significant financial losses for farmers. Small rodents and other small mammals often destroy crops too. Seasonal crops like groundnuts, maize, sweet potatoes, cassava, and fruits (jack fruits, pawpaw, mangoes, etc) are predominantly fed by baboons and monkeys. They damage local farmers' livelihoods, leading to frustration and sometimes retaliatory actions against wild animals.

5.1.2 Habitat encroachment

Human activities such as farming, settlement, and deforestation threaten the natural habitats of wild animals. As humans clear land for agriculture or settlement, wild animals are displaced, leading to a reduction in forest cover and food sources. This encroachment intensifies competition for resources and increases the likelihood of contact between humans and animals that reside in Itohya Forest.

5.1.3 Wildlife attacks

There are instances where wildlife, especially primates, are threatened by humans or perceive humans as competitors. Often taking someone's baby, or attacking livestock. In such cases, they become aggressive, particularly if they are defending their territory or young ones. This often results in injuries to humans or property damage, escalating tensions between communities and wildlife.

5.1.4 Competition for water sources

In areas where water is scarce, both humans and wildlife in Itohya Forest rely on the same water sources, leading to increased chances of direct encounters. These encounters lead to fear or negative interactions, especially if wild animals are perceived as a danger to livestock or scare people who want to fetch water, yet, children have a responsibility to fetch water for domestic use.

5.1.5 Retaliatory killings and poaching

Some community members resort to killing or injuring wildlife as a form of retaliation for crop raids, livestock attacks, and threats, to human safety, competition for resources, and general lack of compensation or support for damages. This creates a cycle of conflict that harms wildlife populations. While animals are protected, there are occasional poaching activities, further straining relationships between humans and wildlife.

5.1.6 Land use changes and development

Infrastructure development, such as roads or settlements near Itohya Forest, has disrupted the movement patterns of wild animals, fragmenting their natural habitat, and increasing their interactions with human beings. The resulting proximity raises the chances of conflict, especially if wild animals are displaced and forced into human-dominated landscapes. This has several negative outcomes such as increased human-wildlife conflict, loss of biodiversity, wildlife mortality due to vehicle collisions, spread of diseases and so many others.

5.1.7 Human fear and misunderstanding

Fear of wildlife, driven by lack of knowledge or previous negative encounters, leads to hostility from the community.
Misunderstanding wildlife (primates) behavior worsens conflicts, as locals view the animals as a constant threat rather than an integral part of the ecosystem. For example, primates raid crops not because they are inherently destructive but because their natural food sources have been depleted due to deforestation or habitat loss. Communities often misunderstand this behavior, seeing it as malicious, when in reality, it is a survival tactic for the animals. Chimpanzees are highly intelligent and social animals. Aggression often occurs when they feel threatened or when their habitat has been encroached upon. Villagers misinterpret this defensive behavior as intentional hostility, which leads to retaliatory violence against the animals. Primates are opportunistic feeders and are attracted to easy food sources when their habitat is fragmented or food is scarce. Their natural behaviors are perceived as deliberate invasions. Locals will not understand why the animals are increasingly entering human spaces.

Among the Banyoro, primates are associated with superstitions, bad luck, or disease. This cultural fear exacerbates hostility, leading to killing or harming primates that are viewed as dangerous, even when they pose no actual threat. Without proper education about the ecological roles, primates play in seed dispersal, forest regeneration, and ecosystem health. Negative encounters or myths about the animals create an atmosphere of fear and intolerance. Such fear-based actions lead to unnecessary killings of primates, which can harm the balance of local ecosystems and disrupt the natural processes that these animals contribute to.

5.1.8 Attack on livestock

Wild animal attacks on livestock, particularly small animals preying on poultry, though not common, are an emerging concern in the context of Itohya Forest. These attacks occur primarily due to the encroachment of human activities into wildlife habitats. As human settlements and agricultural activities expand into areas near the forest, wildlife is pushed out of its natural habitat and resorts to preying on domestic animals for survival. While attacks on larger livestock are rare in the villages surrounding Itohya Forest, smaller animals like poultry are more vulnerable to predators such as wild cats, birds of prey, and other small carnivores.

5.1.9 Property damage

Chimpanzees and baboons sometimes cause damage to property and homes while searching for food. Although incidents of destruction, such as damage to kitchens and toilets, are uncommon, they do occur occasionally. In Itohya Forest, baboons raid homes in search of food. These raids result in damage to kitchens, and open cupboards causing significant destruction. They are also known to break windows or doors to gain entry. Chimpanzees, too, venture into human settlements, causing property damage. While

these occurrences are rare, they cause alarm and frustration among locals when they do happen.

5.1.10 Threats to human safety

While rare, conflicts with wildlife have raised safety concerns, particularly involving chimpanzees and baboons. Chimpanzees have been known to occasionally attack women and children. Although such incidents are few, even a single case is considered highly dangerous. There have been reported attacks in Kyabigambire, Hoima District, which suggests that similar incidents cannot be ruled out in other areas. Additionally, chimpanzees may attempt to migrate between habitats like Bugoma and Wambabya forests, potentially posing a threat to women and children they encounter along the way, highlighting a potential conflict.

Chimpanzees also pose a risk of transmitting zoonotic diseases, such as brucellosis and rabies. Studies conducted in Itohya Forest have explored these health risks. About a year ago, a chimpanzee was found in the local community, staying for four days. Although it did not cause any harm, it sparked fear, anxiety, and panic, particularly among women and school-going children.

5.2 Human-related conflicts

5.2.1 Agricultural encroachment

The expansion of farming into forested areas in and around Itohya Forest has led to increased deforestation and habitat destruction. As more land is cleared for agriculture, the natural forest cover is diminished, resulting in the loss of crucial habitats for wildlife. This has forced the large population of wild animals (chimpanzees, baboons, and other species) to squeeze into the relatively small area of about 800 acres, bringing them into closer contact with human settlements. The destruction of these habitats not only threatens the survival of wildlife but also disrupts the ecological balance. Furthermore, the fragmentation of the forest (due to settlement, and agriculture) limits wildlife movement, isolating populations and reducing their access to other essential habitats, which are crucial for their long-term survival.

5.2.2 Forest resource competition

Local communities frequently rely on forest resources such as firewood, timber, poles, non-forest products, and medicinal plants for their daily needs. These resources are essential for cooking, building, traditional medicine, and various economic activities.

However, when large numbers of people extract these resources without sustainable management practices in place, it can lead to overharvesting. Overharvesting depletes forest resources faster than they can regenerate, which degrades the forest ecosystem, reduces biodiversity, and disrupts the ecological balance.

In many cases, communities engage in these activities without the legal permissions required by forest regulations. As forests are often protected by laws to ensure their sustainable use, unauthorized harvesting is considered illegal. Consequently, forest managers and forest law enforcement arrest individuals involved in such activities. These individuals are sometimes taken to court for violating forest laws, which can result in fines, imprisonment, or other penalties. Communities, then, become unhappy with forest managers.

This situation reflects a complex issue where the livelihood needs of local communities clash with conservation efforts. Sustainable solutions often involve balancing the legal use of forest resources with conservation practices, such as offering alternative livelihoods, community-managed forestry, and awareness programs to prevent overexploitation.

5.2.3 Illegal resource extraction

Unregulated logging, firewood collection, and charcoal production in Itohya Forest lead to the depletion of vital forest resources. In addition to these activities, local communities rely on forest resources such as poles (for building), rattan (for crafting furniture and other items), and non-wood products (such as medicinal plants and fruits). In the absence of regulated access, these practices put further pressure on the forest, threatening its ability to sustain itself over time. If left unchecked, this overharvesting can lead to a loss of forest cover, reduced biodiversity, soil erosion, and diminished ecosystem services, ultimately impacting the livelihoods of the communities that depend on the forest.

5.2.4 Conflict over forest boundary

There are conflicting claims over forest boundaries and ownership rights, though this is minimal. It is caused by a lack of clarity or disagreement about where the official boundaries of a forest lie. This means that the precise limits of the forest have not been marked or maintained on the ground. As a result, both the local community and forest managers have differing interpretations of where the forest begins and ends. In such cases, local communities encroach on forest land, believing it to be part of their land. On the other hand, forest managers assert that the land belongs to the forest or protected area.

5.2.5 Exclusion from decision-making

Communities have voiced concerns about being excluded from important decisions regarding forest management. To address this issue, and with support from the Ecological Trends Alliance, FICCA, other clubs, and community groups, efforts have been made to improve communication and collaboration with forest managers. These groups have been established to ensure that community input is integrated into the overall planning process.

5.2.6 Competing stakeholder interests

St. Joseph Vocational Technical Institute, the Catholic Church, and Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) such as the Ecological Trends Alliance and Chimpanzee Trust, focus on conserving the forest and wildlife therein which contradicts the community's immediate needs for land, food, and resources, leading to resentment from locals who see conservation efforts as infringing on their livelihoods.

5.2.7 Livelihood conflicts

When people cut down trees for firewood, it contributes to deforestation, which can upset forest managers responsible for maintaining the forest's health and sustainability. Similarly, the unauthorized cutting of trees for poles and hoe handles can lead to disputes with forest managers. These activities are often not permitted and can harm the forest ecosystem. Some community members engage in these activities not just for personal use but for sale, turning forest resources into a source of income.

This commercial use, especially when unauthorized, is considered theft. Activities like charcoal production or extraction of poles are not allowed under the forest management rules. When these activities occur, they not only break the rules but also create additional tension between the community and forest authorities.

Therefore, unauthorized and commercial exploitation of forest resources leads to conflicts with forest managers and creates ongoing tension due to the violation of rules and regulations designed to protect the forest.

5.2.8 Poaching

Hunting or capturing animals (poaching) within Itohya Forest is illegal. Despite the prohibition, surveillance cameras placed in the forest frequently capture footage of people engaging in poaching activities. The footage from these cameras provides evidence that the prohibition is being violated, highlighting ongoing issues with illegal hunting or trapping in the forest.

5.2.9 Bush burning

Bush burning (the practice of setting fire to vegetation in the forest) results in significant damage to both the ecosystem and the finances related to Itohya Forest. Bush burning can destroy plant and animal habitats, reduce biodiversity, and disrupt the forest's ecological balance. It leads to soil degradation, and loss of vegetation, and negatively impacts wildlife. It also causes financial impact, including costs related to the damage of forest resources, loss of potential revenue from sustainable forest products, and expenses related to firefighting and restoration efforts. In addition, the degradation of the forest reduces its value and the benefits it provides to local communities and the economy. Forest managers believe that bushfires, where and when they occur, are set by the communities, in exercise hunting, honey collection, or simply a sport.

5.2.10 Cultivation in open areas within Itohya Forest

The practice of farming or cultivating crops in the open areas of the forest is no longer permitted. Instead, efforts are focused on promoting the natural regeneration of the forest to restore its health and ecological balance. In addition, a specific proposal to cultivate sugarcane in these forest areas was stopped or suspended. This decision likely reflects a commitment to preserving the forest and allowing it to recover, rather than allowing agricultural activities that could further disrupt or damage the forest ecosystem. Therefore, communities intending to seek permission to be allowed to cultivate crops in open grassland will raise conflicts.

5.3 Policy-related conflicts and grievances

Policy-related grievances in Itohya Forest arise due to various factors that contribute to tension and conflict between local communities and forest managers. These grievances typically result from the following causes:

5.3.1 Lack of community involvement in decision-making

Local communities often feel left out of key decisions related to forest management. The absence of proper consultation during the planning and implementation of policies can create resentment, as communities may feel that their needs, opinions, and traditional knowledge are being ignored. Communities around Itohya Forest feel that policies are imposed without involving them or seeking their input which has led to a lack of ownership and can generate opposition to forest management practices.

5.3.2 Unclear or inconsistent policies

There are vague or poorly communicated policies regarding access to forest resources. For example, whereas it is understandable to restrict access to timber, communities question why there is restricted access to firewood which is desired by the communities for their cooking. This causes misunderstandings. Communities are uncertain about what is allowed or restricted. Inconsistent enforcement of regulations, or frequent changes in forest management policies, frustrates communities that rely on forest resources.

5.3.3 Failure to address grievances

If there is no established or trusted process for community members to lodge complaints and resolve conflicts, communities feel their concerns are not being taken seriously. For example, animals have continuously destroyed crops and the forest managers have not responded. This escalates frustrations and leads to a breakdown in relations between forest managers and the community. Delayed or ineffective responses from forest managers deepen discontent.

5.3.4 Unopened or disputed forest boundaries

In Itohya Forest, unclear or unopened boundaries between forest land and community land create conflicts over land ownership and use rights. Boundaries of Itohya Forest, much as they are known, have not been re-opened for some time. In instances like these, they cause policy grievances when community members believe forest managers are encroaching on their lands or when they are penalized for activities they thought were allowed.

5.3.5 Inadequate compensation for wildlife-related losses

Communities surrounding Itohya Forest often suffer from crop losses due to wildlife raids (e.g., from chimpanzees, and baboons). Itohya Forest does not have compensation mechanisms for such losses. This fuels grievances yet they exacerbate livelihood disruption.

5.3.6 Poor communication of conservation goals

If forest policies focus on conservation but fail to explain or demonstrate the tangible benefits of these efforts to local communities, people will not understand why restrictions are being imposed. They will view policies as burdensome rather than as contributing to the long-term health of the environment and the community.

6.4   Gender concerns in human-wildlife conflicts at Itohya

Gender concerns in human-wildlife conflict at Itohya Forest revolve around the following issues:

i.   In Itohya Forest, women and marginalized groups have limited involvement in conflict redress mechanisms due to cultural norms that prioritize men's voices in community and leadership settings. Women's traditional roles, such as farming and gathering resources such as firewood and water for domestic gains, directly expose them to human-wildlife conflicts, yet their experiences are often excluded from discussions and decisions.

ii.   Women are often primary caregivers and manage household food security. The communities surrounding Itohya Forest rely heavily on forest resources like firewood, fruits, mushrooms, honey, and water. Therefore, wildlife attacks on crops or livestock affect women's ability to sustain their families, increasing their vulnerability to poverty and food insecurity.

iii.   There is a higher risk of encountering dangerous wildlife during activities like fetching firewood or water, especially in remote areas. This adds a layer of fear and insecurity, which limits the freedom and ability of women to access forest resources.

iv.   Women face barriers to accessing legal systems or financial compensation for wildlife-related damages due to lack of land ownership, lack of ownership of property, formal education, or documentation. In Itohya Forest, and surrounding communities there have been no women compensated before, as compensation mechanisms often prioritize male-headed households, that can argue for compensation, leaving women at a disadvantage.

v.   Existing conflict redress mechanisms may not address the different needs and roles of men and women in the community. Strategies often fail to include gender-sensitive approaches, perpetuating inequities.

vi.   In some cases, societal expectations may prevent women from voicing their concerns or participating in conflict resolution processes. Local leaders, often men, may dominate mechanisms, sidelining gender-inclusive dialogue.

5.4.1 Recommendations for a gender-responsive conflict redress

To have a gender-responsive conflict redress in Itohya Forest, the following must be considered:

1. Ensure women in the surrounding villages are represented in conflict resolution committees and decision-making processes.

2. Train surrounding communities/villages on the importance of gender equity in human-wildlife conflict resolution.

3. Design compensation schemes and resource access systems that address women's specific challenges and vulnerabilities.

4. Empower women with knowledge and tools to prevent and mitigate human-wildlife conflicts, such as using safe farming practices or alternative livelihoods.

5. Challenge cultural norms that marginalize women by fostering dialogue on shared responsibilities and gender equality.

Conflict Redress Mechanism

The Conflict Redress Mechanism is a double-pronged process. The establishment of such a committee can create tension between community members, as some are included in the discussions and others are not. It is important to make sure that all different groups are considered, including women, youth, and children. On the other side, it is recommended to resolve Human-Wildlife Conflicts (HWC) because it provides a structured, inclusive, and sustainable approach to addressing disputes and mitigating negative impacts on both humans and wildlife. This informed the choice to go ahead.

7.1 Conflict redress mechanism for wildlife conflicts in Itohya Forest

A conflict redress mechanism for wildlife conflicts in Itohya Forest is crucial to address the recurring issues between local communities and wildlife, such as crop raids, property damage, and threats to human safety. This mechanism aims to create a sustainable approach to resolving these conflicts while ensuring wildlife conservation and minimizing the negative impacts on the livelihoods of nearby communities. It embraces the following key elements:

7.1.1 Wildlife monitoring

The forest managers in Itohya should set up wildlife monitoring systems, such as patrols, to track animal movements, especially those prone to raiding crops like chimpanzees, baboons, and various species of monkeys. This helps detect potential conflicts early. They should also establish communication channels like hotlines, a local community monitoring office, or at St. Joseph Vocational Training Institute) for community members to report wildlife intrusion. This allows for rapid response by forest management.

7.1.2 Buffer zones and physical barriers

Forest managers should create buffer zones around agricultural areas and settlements near the forest to reduce direct encounters between wildlife and humans. These zones can include non-palatable crops designated wildlife corridors, or fragile ecosystems like wetlands, to redirect animal movement. The physical barriers should include fences (e.g., Mauritius thorns), or other deterrents like beehive fences along forest boundaries. Mauritius thorns are impenetrable by primates while beehive fences, not only scare away primates but also generate honey as an income source for farmers.

7.1.3   Compensation schemes

The forest managers should set up a compensation fund to reimburse farmers for crop or livestock losses due to wildlife. This fund can be managed by a Community Resource Committee (CRC) and financed through contributions from government, NGOs, and ecotourism revenues. The forest managers can also decide to allocate a portion of the income generated from forest activities (e.g., ecotourism) to directly compensate affected communities. For example, part of the ecotourism revenue can be set aside for wildlife conflict mitigation and compensation.

7.1.4   Wildlife deterrence strategies

The forest managers should implement deterrents such as noise devices, scarecrows, or flashing lights to discourage wildlife from entering farms. Communities can use locally available materials to create these deterrents. Secondly, the forest should be enriched to contain wild animals by enhancing wildlife habitats within the forest by planting fruit trees (Avocado, Jackfruit, berries, etc) or providing water sources, encouraging wildlife to stay inside the forest rather than venture into farmlands for food. In extreme cases, forest managers should consider reducing populations of Baboons and species of Monkeys for example, that repeatedly cause damage, in consultation with wildlife authorities like the Uganda Wildlife Authority, who will offer manpower and ammunition to do so.

7.1.5   Education and community awareness

Forest managers should educate and create awareness in communities on wildlife behavior, conflict prevention techniques, and how to safely coexist with wildlife. This includes training on methods to deter wildlife and how to protect crops without harming animals. They should develop education and awareness school programs, including educational visits for schoolchildren to learn about wildlife conservation, human-wildlife conflict, and the role of forests in biodiversity protection. This fosters a culture of coexistence from a young age. They should organize coexistence workshops for farmers and local leaders to discuss conflict prevention, compensation mechanisms, and the importance of conservation. This promotes a cooperative approach to conflict resolution.

7.1.6   Wildlife-friendly agriculture

Forest Managers should encourage farmers to plant crops that are less attractive to wildlife, such as chili, lemongrass, Irish potatoes, onions, tea, or other deterrent crops. These crops can act as barriers around more valuable fields or serve as alternative sources of income. They should promote alternative livelihoods such as beekeeping, which not only serves as a deterrent to wildlife (e.g., using beehive fences) but also provides farmers with additional income. Ecotourism activities, such as guided forest tours, can also generate revenue.

7.1.7 Dispute resolution and mediation

The forest managers should establish wildlife conflict committees composed of community members, local leaders, and forest managers. These committees will be responsible for resolving disputes between affected parties and ensuring fair mitigation measures. They should use respected community leaders or elders to mediate conflicts between farmers and forest managers. This fosters local solutions based on trust and cultural practices. The committees should be trained for both community members and forest managers on conflict resolution techniques, helping both sides resolve disputes before they escalate into larger conflicts.

7.1.8 Policy support and government involvement

The forest managers should engage government agencies, such as the Uganda Wildlife Authority (UWA), National Forestry Authority (NFA), and National Environment Management Authority (NEMA) as well as the District Local Government, especially the District Natural Resources Officers, the District Forestry Officer, to provide technical and financial support for conflict resolution, including compensation schemes and wildlife management strategies. They should also advocate for policies that prioritize human-wildlife conflict mitigation, ensuring that affected communities have legal choice and protection. This includes lobbying for more support from the government for wildlife management in conflict-prone areas. They should also aim at partnerships with conservation NGOs (Ecological Trends Alliance, WCS, Chimpanzee Trust among others) to support wildlife monitoring, community training, and compensation schemes. NGOs can also play a role in funding conflict mitigation strategies and providing expertise.

7.1.9 Ecotourism as a conflict mitigation tool

The forest managers should use a portion of the revenue generated from ecotourism activities to fund wildlife conflict mitigation efforts. This could include compensation funds, building barriers, or creating alternative livelihoods for affected communities. It should embrace wildlife conflict education into ecotourism programs, helping tourists understand the challenges faced by local communities and how their contributions can aid conservation and conflict mitigation efforts.

7.2 Conflict redress mechanism for human-related conflicts in Itohya Forest

A **conflict redress mechanism for human-related conflicts** in Itohya Forest is designed to address disputes between the local community and forest managers, specifically regarding the use and access to forest resources. These conflicts often arise from competition over timber, firewood, poles, medicinal plants, charcoal production, and on rare occasions land use. Establishing a structured process to resolve these conflicts is essential for maintaining harmony between the community and forest managers, ensuring sustainable forest management, and promoting equitable resource access.

7.2.1 Community engagement and representation

Committees composed of local community leaders, elders, women's groups, youth representatives, and forest managers, should be formed. These committees serve as the first point of contact for any resource-related conflicts. These committees should ensure that community members are involved in decision-making processes related to forest resource use, creating a sense of ownership and reducing the likelihood of conflicts. They

should hold regular meetings with community members to discuss resource use, identify potential issues, and develop collaborative solutions before conflicts escalate.

7.2.2 Grievance reporting and documentation

The forest managers should set up easy and accessible channels for community members to report grievances related to resource access, land use, or disputes over forest boundaries. This could be at the institute, St. Joseph Vocational Training Institute, or even using mobile phones or during village meetings. All grievances should be documented transparently and systematically. This documentation should include details such as the nature of the complaint, the individuals involved, and proposed resolutions.

7.2.3 Conflict mediation

It is important to establish a neutral body or mediator (e.g., the Conflict Redress Committee) to mediate disputes between community members and forest management. Ensure that grievances are addressed promptly to prevent the escalation of conflicts. Where appropriate, employ traditional or community-based dispute resolution mechanisms to settle conflicts in a culturally sensitive manner.

7.2.4 Equitable resource access policies

It is important to establish clear guidelines and agreements that outline how community members can access forest resources (e.g., firewood, medicinal plants, poles) in a sustainable and regulated manner. Forest Managers should create designated areas within the forest for specific resource extraction activities (e.g., firewood collection or grazing) and develop sustainable use guidelines that dictate how resources can be harvested without depleting the forest. These guidelines should be communicated to the community and enforced by forest management.

7.2.5 Capacity building and livelihood alternatives

Forest managers should provide training for community members on sustainable forest use practices, alternative livelihoods, and resource management. Training programs can include agroforestry, sustainable charcoal production, or the cultivation of non-forest-based crops among others. They should promote alternative income-generating activities, such as beekeeping, ecotourism, or handicrafts, to reduce dependency on forest resources and engage the community in forest conservation work (e.g., as forest guards or eco-tourism

guides), providing them with income while reducing the pressure on forest resources.

7.2.6 Monitoring and Enforcement

Forest Managers should involve community members in the monitoring of forest resource use, helping to identify and prevent illegal activities like charcoal production, tree cutting, or encroachment. They should employ and train forest guards from the local community to monitor and enforce sustainable resource use policies and clearly outline the penalties for illegal resource extraction or violations of forest management policies. These penalties should be fairly enforced, with a focus on restorative justice and compensation where necessary.

7.2.7 Communication and transparency

Forest managers should establish channels for regular communication between the community and forest management to ensure transparency in decision-making processes and resource allocation. Forest management should be transparent in how decisions are made about resource use and access. This can help reduce suspicions or accusations of favoritism and build trust within the community.

7.3 Conflict redress mechanism for policy conflicts and grievances in Itohya Forest.

A conflict redress mechanism for policy conflicts and grievances in Itohya Forest must provide a structured process to resolve tensions between forest managers and the local community, particularly related to policy disagreements, resource access, and decision-making processes. The process includes the following.

7.3.1 Establishment of a Conflict Redress Committee (CRC)

The CRC should include representatives from the local community (elders, community leaders, and women's groups), and forest managers (St. Joseph Vocational Training Institute, district officials particularly the District Natural Resouce Officer, Uganda Wildlife Authority representative, legal experts, and civil society groups such as Ecological Trends Alliance. This would be a neutral body to oversee grievances related to forest management policies, ensuring that complaints are heard and addressed fairly.

7.3.2 Clear grievance submission procedures

The community should have clear and accessible ways to submit grievances, whether through written, verbal, or online formats. This should be at the institute, St. Joseph Vocational Training Institute. All complaints should be formally documented, including the nature of the grievance, the involved parties, and the desired resolution. This ensures accountability and transparency in how conflicts are handled.

7.3.3 Transparent conflict resolution process

The CRC reviews grievances within a defined period (e.g., 2-4 weeks) after submission, investigating the claim by interviewing relevant parties and reviewing any available evidence or documentation. Where appropriate, the CRC will offer mediation between the community and forest managers, focusing on finding mutually acceptable solutions. This could include reviewing disputed policies, clarifying rules, or amending practices to better align with community needs. The forest managers should also **hold** regular forums or village meetings where community members can directly voice their concerns to forest managers and the CRC. This open dialogue promotes transparency and helps prevent conflicts from escalating.

7.3.4 Policy review and adaptation

If grievances arise due to unclear or unfavorable policies (e.g., restrictions on resource access), the CRC will/should have the mandate to recommend revisions. Policy changes could include allowing limited resource access (firewood collection, grazing) or adjusting policies based on traditional or community rights. Before introducing new policies, forest managers should consult with local communities through the CRC, ensuring that the policies reflect the needs and concerns of the community while aligning with conservation goals.

7.3.5 Training and capacity building

Both community leaders and forest managers should receive training on conflict resolution techniques, negotiation, and mediation. This helps both sides better handle disputes when they arise and reduces the likelihood of escalation. The forest managers should conduct workshops to educate the community about forest policies, the reasons behind restrictions (e.g., conservation goals), and the long-term benefits of sustainable resource management.

7.3.6 Provision of feedback
A periodic review of resolved and unresolved cases will ensure accountability and highlight

areas for improvement in the redress mechanism. After addressing grievances, feedback should be sought from the involved parties to assess their satisfaction with the process.

7.3.7 Incorporation of Alternative Dispute Resolution

Where formal legal proceedings are unnecessary, alternative dispute resolution methods, such as mediation and arbitration, should be offered. This allows quicker and less confrontational resolutions to disputes without the need for courts. **The forest managers should e**ncourage traditional methods of conflict resolution that resonate with local customs and norms, facilitated by respected local elders.

7.3.8 Conflict prevention strategies

Engaging the community regularly through consultations, information sharing, and co-management strategies helps build trust and can prevent many conflicts from arising. In addition, it is necessary to involve the community in developing forest management plans and policies to ensure that they understand and support decisions regarding resource use and restrictions.

7.4   Conflict resolution framework

7.4.1   Conflict resolution committee (CRC):

Itohya Forest (or the manager of Itohya Forest) needs to establish a multi-stakeholder CRC, consisting of forest managers, the "Friends of TECO", St. Joseph Vocational Training Institute, the Diocese of the Catholic Church of Hoima, the representative of Kikuube District Local Government, community leaders of FICCA, and conservation experts (ETA, Chimpanzee Trust). This committee will act as the primary body for handling conflicts, be it Human-wildlife, human-related, and conflicts that are policy in nature. Its roles will include mediation, arbitration, compensation decision-making, and ensuring community participation in conflict resolution. The CRC will maintain a recording of disputes and filing of complaints. This will include both formal and informal reporting channels, accessible to all community members.

7.4.2   Community engagement and education

Itohya Forest needs to conduct workshops and awareness programs (monthly, quarterly, bi-annual) targeting communities, workers of different organizations in the vicinity, and schools, on mitigating wildlife unwelcome or forceful entry that leads to conflict or disruption. The topics to be covered include crop protection strategies, deterrent methods that keep animals away from crops or human settlements, and wildlife behavior among others. The management of the forest should involve local communities (clubs or associations) in forest management through participatory approaches, including the formation of forest user groups to regulate the sustainable harvesting of resources.

7.4.3 Conflict mitigation strategies

It is necessary to develop a comprehensive conflict management strategy for Itohya Forest. Among the components to include in that strategy, is the physical barrier or fencing (of Mauritius thorns) to prevent wildlife raids that the communities have proposed. Communities have also prosed the following:

i.   Train and equip farmers in agroforestry skills, providing seedlings to establish woodlots to meet household needs for cooking and prevent entry into Itohya Forest.

ii.   Train and equip farmers with unpalatable crops to primates, introduce farmers to climate-smart agricultural practices of those crops that reduce the likelihood of conflict with wildlife, and undertake market analysis to aid market identification and sourcing.

iii. Establish wildlife monitoring teams, comprised of community members, and forest guards, to track the movement of wildlife and warn of potential to raid crops.

iv.   Undertaking a population census of wild animals, especially the vermins, with a view of depopulating them (baboons and vervet monkeys) to control their populations,

v.   Scare tactics have been proposed, to frighten or discourage wildlife from entering farms or settlements, to prevent conflicts between humans and animals. Devices that produce loud sounds, such as bells, and whistles, scare away animals like monkeys, or other wildlife that approach farms or homes. Using scarecrows, such as models of larger animals will trick wildlife into believing there is danger, discouraging them from entering specific areas. Trained dogs or other animals can be used to patrol the boundaries of farms or settlements to scare away wildlife and protect crops or livestock.

7.4.4 Alternative livelihoods

Management of Itohya Forest should develop an alternative livelihoods plan, to promote and support alternative livelihoods:

1.   Beekeeping, or the practice of keeping bees to harness resources such as honey, wax, and propolis, is a cost-effective livelihood alternative that can help mitigate wildlife conflicts. By placing bee hives, particularly those produced locally at TECO, communities can generate income while also deterring wildlife, as many animals, including elephants, avoid areas with bees. The benefits of beekeeping are that it provides an alternative livelihood for communities, offering sustainable products like honey and beeswax, which can be sold for income. Bees can serve as a natural deterrent, as wildlife tend to avoid areas where beehives are present, reducing crop raiding or property damage. The locally produced bee hives from TECO will make beekeeping a cheap and accessible option for rural communities. On the other hand, beekeeping promotes biodiversity and supports pollination, contributing to healthier ecosystems while preventing further habitat destruction from other economic activities

2. Ecotourism is another valuable way to generate income while conserving Itohya Forest. By developing an eco-tourism center, the local community can benefit financially from tourists who visit the forest. The center would serve as a hub for tourists, offering guided tours and showcasing the natural beauty and wildlife of Itohya Forest. Visitors can observe species such as chimpanzees, Vervet monkeys, Red-tailed monkeys, Black & white Colobus, Grey-checked Mangabey, and Olive baboons in their natural habitat. Secondly, the community earns income by selling local products such as crafts, food, and forest-related goods to tourists. These sales help diversify the economy, providing a livelihood alternative that doesn't rely on harmful activities like deforestation or poaching. All that Itohya Forest needs is to erect signposts around the forest to inform visitors that this is a private, protected area that hosts chimpanzees, baboons, monkeys, and bush pigs, and offers eco-tourism services. The signposts will help guide tourists to key spots in the forest and promote the area's unique biodiversity, attracting more eco-conscious visitors. Lastly, encouraging eco-tourism will reduce the pressure on the forest by providing income that does not rely on farming. This will help alleviate issues like crop raiding by wildlife, which threatens food security in the community. As eco-tourism grows, it will offer a sustainable alternative to agriculture that's often disrupted by animals.

3. Small-scale businesses like handicrafts, wood carving, poultry farming, and cultivating crops that primates do not eat can help reduce reliance on forest resources. Growing fruits and crops that are unappealing to primates also minimizes conflict. Additionally, increasing the availability of fruits such as mangoes and pawpaws within the forest encourages wildlife to remain in their natural habitat, reducing their movement into human areas.

4. Farmers can be encouraged to plant Indigenous and multi-purpose tree species on their farmland. These trees will help improve agricultural productivity by providing benefits like soil improvement, shade, and windbreaks. Additionally, they can generate income through the sale of products such as timber, fruits, or medicinal plants. They can also provide alternative energy sources. Providing tree seedlings to the community for planting on their land is a way to support this effort, helping farmers incorporate these trees into their farming systems. This approach not only boosts farm productivity but also promotes sustainable land use and reduces pressure on forest resources.

5. Savings and Credit Cooperative Organizations (SACCOs), if introduced, provide financial support to communities, offering a sustainable way for women, children, men, and other members to save money and access loans. By borrowing from SACCOs, communities invest in livelihood alternatives rather than depending on activities that might lead to conflicts with wildlife, such as farming in areas prone to raids by primates. In the Budongo forest ecosystem range, communities near forested areas often face crop raiding by primates like baboons and monkeys. Many women in these areas are part of SACCOs, which helps them borrow money to invest in other economic activities, reducing reliance on crops prone to wildlife conflict. They provide a financial safety net for households to pursue alternative income-generating ventures such as poultry farming or handicrafts, reducing the impact of wildlife conflicts. SACCOs have been instrumental in helping women access funds for small businesses and farming crops less attractive to wildlife, like unpalatable fruits or vegetables. Therefore, they can do the same for Itohya Forest, once established and equipped.

7.4.5 Law enforcement and security against wrongdoers.

Ensuring law enforcement and security in the forest is essential, as it can be a hiding place for thieves, and other criminal elements. For instance, there was a case where a thief hid in the forest for over a year, stealing chickens and food from the local community. This poses not only a threat to the safety of the people but also disrupts the peace in surrounding areas. Given the forest's vastness and the darkness that makes it an ideal hideout, security measures need to be strengthened. This is particularly important because we have schools, women, and other institutions nearby, and the presence of criminal activity could endanger students and residents alike.

To address these concerns, there is a proposal for employing and deploying trained security personnel or forest guards to patrol the area regularly. Their role would be to monitor and safeguard both the forest and the surrounding communities. These guards would deter criminal activity and ensure the safety of all, including those using the forest for conservation or educational purposes. Therefore, by investing in robust security measures, we not only protect the community but also maintain a safe environment that supports forest management and development efforts.

7.4.6 Education, Training, and Exchange Visits

Educational visits to the forest should be encouraged for schoolchildren, allowing them to learn about the animals, various tree species, challenges within the forest, and the important benefits it provides to surrounding communities. These visits will instill a deeper understanding of the forest ecosystem and foster a sense of responsibility toward its conservation. In addition to educating children, it is essential to train the neighboring communities on how to coexist with the forest. This can be achieved by offering programs that teach sustainable practices and emphasize the role of the forest in their lives.

The St. Joesph Vocational Training Institute (TECO) should play a crucial role in training young people from the local area in practical skills such as welding, carpentry, and hospitality among others. These skills will provide alternative income opportunities, reducing reliance on agriculture and traditional jobs. When we diversify their sources of income, the community will become more resilient and less dependent on activities that may harm the forest.

Higher education initiatives should also be supported, with scholarships targeting students interested in acquiring the skills needed for forest management. This will help build local expertise in sustainable forest practices, ensuring the long-term health of the ecosystem.

Exchange visits are another valuable tool. Members of the Friends of Itohya Community Conservation Association (FICCA) should visit the forest for educational purposes, to enhance their knowledge and understanding of forest management. Special attention should be given to organizing exchange visits, focusing on exposure to new ideas, market research, and learning from other communities' experiences. These visits will empower members of the community by providing them with insights into new business opportunities and sustainable practices.

7.4.7 Corporate Social Responsibility and Investment

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and community investment initiatives, if implemented at Itohya Forest, can significantly contribute to the progress and cohesion of local communities. It will align these efforts with conservation goals, and both social and environmental benefits can be achieved:

1. Investing in the social well-being of the community is a key part of CSR. Contributions, such as raising small funds for community events like burials, visits, and functions, as well as offering scholarships to students from affected communities at the institute can foster a sense of unity and care within the community. Such gestures create a positive image of the community as progressive and socially cohesive, where neighbors support each other during important life events.

    In addition, procuring uniforms for the local champion group (community leaders) and selling them at subsidized prices will enhance a sense of pride and identity. Distributing T-shirts to community members, especially those living near the forest, would further strengthen their connection to conservation efforts and create a visible sign of solidarity and participation.

2. Investing in beekeeping offers a sustainable livelihood option that aligns with forest conservation. The local Technical Institute (TECO) can play a crucial role by making beehives, which can then be distributed to community members. This initiative provides an income source through honey production while also contributing to pollination, which benefits both the forest ecosystem and agricultural activities. Above all, beekeeping along forest boundaries can serve as an effective natural deterrent to keep primates from venturing into farmlands and communities. Primates, such as baboons and monkeys, are often hesitant to approach areas where bees are present due to the risk of being stung. This method provides a non-invasive solution to reduce human-wildlife conflicts, particularly crop raiding, while also offering additional benefits.

3. Another important aspect of community support is ensuring a rapid response system when crop raids occur. Timely interventions can mitigate the impact of wildlife conflicts, protecting the livelihoods of farmers and reducing tension between the community and forest managers. This could involve deploying trained personnel or utilizing technological tools to alert authorities when wildlife ventures into farmlands.

4. Establishing clear boundaries around the forest is essential to prevent encroachment and protect the ecosystem. Planting Mauritius thorns (*Caesalpinia decapetala*) along the forest boundary can serve as a natural, living fence. This thorny plant creates a strong physical barrier, deterring both people and animals from crossing into protected areas. This strategy will ensure that the forest remains intact while reducing human-wildlife conflicts.

5. By combining these efforts—social support, sustainable livelihoods like beekeeping, rapid response to wildlife conflicts, and forest boundary protection—the community will thrive while actively participating in conservation. This integrated approach not only strengthens the community's social fabric but also aligns with the larger goals of forest conservation, preservation, and sustainable development.

7.4.8 Compensation and incentives

It is proposed that Itohya Forest establish a Compensation Fund. The proposed compensation fund will aim to support farmers who lose crops or livestock due to wildlife conflicts. It will help alleviate the financial burden on farmers affected by issues such as crop raids or livestock attacks, ensuring they don't bear the entire loss. The Conflict Resolution Committee (CRC) would be charged with the responsibility of overseeing the fund and ensuring transparent and fair management. They will handle claims, disburse payments, and manage relations between farmers, managers of the forest, and other stakeholders.

The compensation fund will be financed through multiple channels. There will be contributions from the central or local governments to ensure the long-term sustainability of the fund. Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) focused on conservation or rural development could provide financial assistance or technical support for the fund. A percentage generated from ecotourism in Itohya Forest could be channeled into the fund. Once ecotourism in Itohya Forest gains momentum, a portion of the profits from these activities would continually feed the compensation fund, making it more robust over time.

The fund would not just sit idle but would be invested wisely to generate returns. This would ensure that the fund grows over time, increasing its capacity to compensate more farmers and maintain financial stability.

The Uganda Wildlife Authority (UWA) would contribute 2% of its total revenue to the compensation fund. This is specifically allocated for compensating farmers affected by crop raids and other wildlife conflicts.

UWA's contribution would provide a reliable stream of income to the fund.
This compensation fund would create a financial safety net for farmers while encouraging conservation. Farmers would be less likely to take harmful actions against wildlife, knowing that losses from wildlife damage are compensated. The involvement of various stakeholders ensures diverse financial inputs, making the fund sustainable.

Conflict Mediation and Dispute Resolution Process

Conflict mediation and dispute resolution process for human-wildlife conflicts in Itohya Forest and the surrounding communities will require a structured approach to address disputes, reduce tensions, and create a sustainable balance between conservation efforts and community livelihoods. The following will be the processes to follow (though they are not set out in the order of preference):

1. A local Conflict Resolution Committee (CRC) should be created, consisting of representatives from the community, forest managers, Uganda Wildlife Authority, and conservation organizations (Ecological Trends Alliance, Chimpanzee Trust, and others). This committee will act as a neutral body to oversee conflict mediation and ensure a fair and transparent process.

2. Educating the local population about the importance of wildlife conservation (community engagement and awareness) and how human activities may lead to conflicts is essential. Regular community meetings can help raise awareness about the behaviors of wildlife and best practices to minimize encounters, such as securing crops and livestock. Engaging communities in co-existence strategies is key to reducing hostility.

3. A straightforward system should be established for community members to report incidents of wildlife conflict. This could involve setting up a hotline, using local community leaders, or working with village wildlife monitors to report crop raids or attacks on livestock quickly. Rapid reporting allows for timely intervention and prevents escalation, and keeping a record of the incidents is equally vital.

4. Once a conflict is reported, a team from the CRC should assess the situation. This involves visiting the site, gathering information from affected parties, and documenting the extent of the damage. Proper documentation ensures accountability and forms the basis for dispute resolution.

5. The CRC will facilitate mediation between the affected parties (or communities) and the management of the Itohya Forest. This process emphasizes dialogue, where both sides (the community and forest managers) can voice concerns, explain their positions, and propose solutions. Mediation aims to reach a compromise that benefits both sides, reducing tensions and promoting understanding.

6. Compensation mechanisms should be put in place for those who suffer crop or livestock losses due to wildlife. A dedicated **compensation fund**—financed through government support, NGO contributions, and revenues from ecotourism—can provide fair compensation to affected farmers. In addition, conflict mitigation strategies, such as installing beehives to deter primates or fencing vulnerable areas, should be promoted.

7. Implementing preventive measures is essential to reducing the frequency of conflicts. These measures include the use of natural barriers like **Mauritius thorns** to mark forest boundaries and prevent wildlife from straying into farmland. Also, establishing beehives at the forest edges to deter primates from crossing into crop areas and promoting alternative income sources for communities, such as beekeeping, ecotourism, or handicrafts, reducing dependence on farming near the forest.

8. Continuous monitoring of conflict trends is essential to adapt strategies based on the success or failure of existing measures. Regular reviews and meetings between the CRC, community members, and forest managers will help identify new risks and opportunities for improved co-existence.

9. Community members and forest managers should receive training on conflict resolution techniques, wildlife behavior, and sustainable practices that prevent future disputes. Building local capacity ensures long-term resilience in addressing human-wildlife conflicts.

10. Encouraging exchange visits, especially for community leaders and women, to learn about successful conflict management from other regions will provide new perspectives and effective strategies for reducing conflicts in Itohya Forest.

When a structured mediation and resolution process is adhered to and followed, the communities around Itohya Forest will foster peaceful co-existence with wildlife (mainly primates), mitigate the impact of human-wildlife conflicts, and create a system that benefits both conservation and local livelihoods. A detailed work plan is provided in Section 8.1, which is a representation of a structured process that has to be adhered to.

8.1 Capacity building and training areas of interest

The capacity building and training will also concern itself with the education and awareness aspect that is at the core of conflict resolution. Education about the co-existence with wildlife around the Itohya Forest will make sure it is possible to sustain proper forest management without tensions in the future. In addition to the above-stated intention, we propose the following areas of training:

1. **Education about co-existence with wildlife** is a critical strategy for fostering harmonious relationships between humans and wildlife, particularly in areas where human-wildlife conflict (HWC). It will involve creating awareness, imparting knowledge, and building skills that enable communities to live sustainably alongside wildlife while minimizing conflicts and supporting conservation efforts.

2. Conflict resolution and mediation skills where we focus on on negotiation, active listening, and mediation techniques. Communities should train on handling both human-wildlife conflicts and interpersonal conflicts among stakeholders.

3. Stakeholder engagement and communication techniques for engaging local communities, local leaders, authorities, and conservation NGOs. It helps in transparent communication to build trust and prevent misinformation.

4. Understanding Human-Wildlife Conflict dynamics is important in the identification of specific wildlife species causing issues and patterns of conflict. It is important to assess risk and manage wildlife to reduce such incidents.

5. Legal Framework including relevant Ugandan laws on forest conservation, land ownership, and wildlife protection. It also includes the rights and responsibilities of communities, landowners, and conservation authorities.

6. Community awareness - to educate communities on sustainable practices that reduce habitat degradation and minimize conflict, but also emphasizing the benefits of resource-sharing models, such as co-managed forestry and eco-tourism.

7. Monitoring and reporting mechanisms that involve setting up clear and accessible channels for reporting incidents, including the use of phones to communicate incidents.

8.2   Itohya Forest Redress Committee Work Plan

Objective: To resolve human-wildlife and human-related conflicts effectively and sustainably

Activity	Objective	Timeline	Responsible persons	Resources required	Indicators of success
Establish Conflict Resolution Committee	To create a committee consisting of representatives from the community, forest managers, NGOs, and Uganda Wildlife Authority that will act as a neutral body to oversee conflict mediation and ensure a fair and transparent process.	January – February 2025	Ecological Trends Alliance, Chimpanzee Trust, Friends of Itohya Forest, the Church, DLG.	Meeting venue, logistics	Committee established.
Committee capacity building	Train committee members on conflict resolution, co-existence with wildlife, mediation, and community engagement techniques.	January - February 2025	Redress Committee Lead, Kikuube LG, Trainers	Training materials, facilitator, venue	100% of committee members trained
Conflict mapping & identification	Identify and document conflict hotspots and causes within Itohya Forest.	February - March 2025	Committee Members, Community Representatives	GPS/GIS tools, data collection sheets, maps.	Map of conflict hotspots, and documented causes.
Stakeholder consultation meetings	Hold meetings with local communities, wildlife authorities, District Natural Resources Offices, and stakeholders to understand conflict perspectives.	March - April 2025	Redress Committee, DLG officials, community leaders, Wildlife Authority	Meeting venue, transport, refreshments	Minutes from meetings, agreements on key issues
Awareness campaigns	Educate communities on human-wildlife coexistence and forest conservation best practices.	April - June 2025	Redress Committee, DNRO, NGOs, Community leaders, the public	Posters, flyers, community outreach tools, radio messages	5 (five) awareness sessions, increased community awareness

Establish reporting mechanisms	Set up conflict reporting channels for community members.	May 2025	Committee members, IT Support, Hotline	Complaint boxes, contact numbers, forms for reporting conflict incidences, digital forms	Functional reporting system with records
Mediation & conflict resolution	Conduct mediation sessions to resolve reported conflicts fairly and sustainably.	June - September 2025	Mediators, Local Elders, Redress committee	Meeting space, documentation tools, and equipment.	Number of conflicts that have been resolved, and feedback from participants.
Development of Conflict Management Guidelines	Create guidelines on how to handle human-wildlife and human-related conflicts for future cases.	September - October 2025	Committee, Wildlife Authorities, Legal Advisors	Documentation materials, legal consultation	Finalized guidelines, approval by committee
Development of livelihood options	Developing alternative livelihood programs to reduce dependence on forest resources	January – October 2025	Leaders, households, women groups, youth groups	Documentation of options	Report on options for livelihoods
Exchange visit	Organise exchange visits to learn about successful conflict management and new perspectives and effective strategies for reducing conflicts.	September – October 2025	community leaders, women groups, youth groups, school children	Documentation of group exchange visit	Report
Monitoring & Evaluation	Assess the effectiveness of redress actions and adjust the approach as necessary.	Ongoing, Quarterly	Committee Chair, M&E Officer in Charge at Itohya Forest	Survey tools, data analysis software	Quarterly reports, reduced conflict frequency
Reporting and documentation	Compile and submit regular progress reports to local government and stakeholders.	Quarterly	Committee Secretary, Chairperson	Reporting templates, record-keeping system	Quarterly reports submitted, stakeholder feedback
Budget review and adjustment	Review and adjust the budget based on activities and resources needed.	Bi-annually	Committee Treasurer, Local Government	Financial records, budget planning tool	Updated budget aligned with goals

8.3   Budget estimate for implementation of the plan

Expense Item	Cost Estimate (UGX)	Justification
Setting up Conflict Resolution Committee	2,000,000	For setting up the committee, the orientation of roles and responsibilities
Training and capacity building	10,000,000	For initial member training and refresher sessions
Awareness materials	10,000,000	Posters, flyers, radio messages, and community outreach materials
Exchange visit	10,000,000	For communities to learn about effective conflict management
Development of livelihood options	20,000,000	For communities to implement livelihood options
Transport and logistics	5,000,000	For committee movement to conflict areas and meetings
Reporting Mechanism Setup	2,500,000	Establishing complaint boxes, phone lines, and digital forms
Documentation and reporting	2,000,000	For records, report templates, and submissions
Miscellaneous	1,000,000	For unforeseen expenses

Total Estimated Budget: 67,500,000 UGX

8.4   Key success indicators

- A committee is established and oriented on roles and responsibilities.
- Trained committee members equipped with mediation skills.
- Active reporting channels with documented conflict reports.
- Increased community awareness and engagement in conflict prevention.
- Resolution of 75% of reported conflicts by the end of 2025.
- Quarterly reports demonstrating reductions in conflict frequency.

A successful Conflict Redress/Resolution Mechanism for Itohya Forest will require strategic partnerships and a robust funding mechanism to ensure sustainability, community engagement, and effective conflict mitigation. Here below are some proposals, potential partnerships, and funding strategies:

9.1   Partnerships

a) Ministries, departments, and agencies of government.

The **Ministry of Water and Environment**, through the Forest Sector Support Department, will offer policy support, regulatory guidance, and funding opportunities through national conservation programs. As a key stakeholder in wildlife management, the Uganda Wildlife Authority will provide technical expertise, enforcement support, and capacity building for conflict mitigation. The **District Local Government, through the District Forestry Services, will play** a vital role in community mobilization, and ensuring that the community's concerns are represented at higher levels of governance.

b) International Development Agencies

International development agencies like **USAID, World Bank, European Union, GIZ,** and many others, can fund projects on environmental conservation, community resilience, and conflict resolution. Funding opportunities for a **conflict redress/resolution mechanism** in the context of **Itohya Forest** can tap into **climate change funding** and **climate financing,** these funds are often focused on mitigating climate change, promoting forest conservation, and building resilience in communities affected by environmental changes. They include the **Green Climate Fund (GCF), Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation (REDD+), Global Environment Facility (GEF), Adaptation Fund, and Carbon Credits, among others.**

c) Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs)

Conservation NGOs such as the Ecological Trends Alliance, Chimpanzee Trust, **Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS)**, Nature Uganda, and **World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF)** can provide funding, technical support, and community training in human-wildlife conflict mitigation and sustainable livelihood practices. NGOs specializing in educating communities about reforestation and offer training on alternative livelihoods like beekeeping and ecotourism.

c) Private Sector

Private companies, such as those in tourism, agriculture, or energy (like **Total Energies, and** China National Offshore Oil Corporation), could invest in forest conservation and conflict resolution through CSR programs. Their involvement could include funding community projects, providing technology (such as monitoring systems for wildlife), or contributing to a compensation fund.

Companies benefiting from eco-tourism activities in the area could contribute a portion of their revenues toward conflict mitigation and community compensation programs.

d) Community-Based Organizations (CBOs)

Friends of Itohya Community Conservation Associations (FICCA) and local community groups can take on active roles in monitoring, reporting, and mediating conflicts, while also being involved in revenue-sharing from ecotourism and conservation activities. Local SACCOs can provide financial services to communities, helping them establish alternative livelihoods (e.g., beekeeping, poultry farming) that reduce dependence on forest resources and mitigate conflicts with wildlife.

9.2   Funding mechanisms

Several possibilities for funding the conflict redress mechanism are here below. When the conflict is brought to stability, and there is harmony (co-existence between the community and the forest) the funding should stop or should be directed to something else depending on the priorities of the Itohya Forest.

a)   *Government and donor funding*

Government and donor funding refers to financial support provided by governments, international organizations, or private donors to fund projects, programs, or initiatives. These funds are often used for public or community-benefit projects, such as development, conservation, education, health, or infrastructure. The government of Uganda can allocate part of its budget to support the conflict redress mechanism, especially through ministries and agencies responsible for wildlife conservation and environmental management. The owner should aim to secure grants from international donors like **USAID, the World Bank**, or the **European Union** for projects related to human-wildlife conflict resolution, sustainable forest management, community development, and eco-tourism.

b) Ecotourism revenues

Ecotourism revenues refer to the income generated from tourism activities that are focused on experiencing and conserving natural environments while benefiting local communities. These revenues typically come from activities, services, and fees associated with environmentally responsible travel and tourism in natural areas. A portion of the revenue generated from eco-tourism activities in Itohya Forest should be allocated to the conflict resolution mechanism. This can include **entrance fees** to the forest or eco-tourism center, **revenue-sharing** agreements with local eco-tourism operators, and encouraging communities to sell products (handicrafts, food, honey from beekeeping) to tourists as part of the eco-tourism initiative. A small percentage of these earnings can go into the conflict resolution fund.

c) Compensation fund

A compensation fund is a dedicated financial resource established to provide monetary or non-monetary compensation to individuals or communities who have suffered losses or damages due to specific incidents, policies, or activities. In this case, they are funds dedicated to compensate farmers for crop and livestock losses due to wildlife raids. This fund could be financed through **2% of UWA's total revenue** (as a portion of Uganda's national compensation program), contributions from NGOs, corporate partners (through CSR), and ecotourism operators. As well, **a** portion of the income generated from alternative livelihoods like beekeeping, timber, or other forest products could be invested into the fund to support rapid compensation.

d) Environmental and carbon offset funds

An **Environmental and Carbon Offset Fund** is a financial mechanism designed to support projects and initiatives that mitigate environmental degradation and offset carbon emissions. These funds are often established by governments, corporations, or environmental organizations to address the environmental impacts of industrial activities, development projects, or greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. Engaging in carbon offset programs will generate additional funds for forest conservation and conflict resolution efforts. Carbon credits earned from reforestation activities in Itohya Forest can be sold to corporations looking to offset their emissions. International environmental agencies that support reforestation and carbon sequestration programs may provide funding for sustainable forest management efforts, including conflict mitigation initiatives.

Recommendation and Conclusion

10.1   Recommendations

After all, the said issues and reflections, the study on conflict redress mechanism for Itohya Forest therefore comes up with the following final recommendations:

1. The study recommends identifying and involving all key stakeholders, including St. Joseph Catholic Church, local communities, government agencies, and conservation organizations. This would result in the establishment of a multi-stakeholder platform for engagement and collaboration to ensure inclusivity in decision-making.

2. The owners of the forest should conduct awareness campaigns and where possible training on selected topics on the ecological importance of Itohya Forest and the need for sustainable practices. In doing so, they will have provided education and training on conflict resolution and the benefits of coexistence with wildlife.

3. There should be local conflict resolution committees comprising local government officials, the Uganda Wildlife Authority, respected community leaders in the 10 surrounding villages, local government representatives, and church officials. This committee should have delegated responsibility to mediate disputes and provide solutions acceptable to all parties.

4. There are ongoing livelihood programs already taking place in Itohya Forest, like the growing of unpalatable crop varieties. Whereas this study strongly recommends their continuity, it goes ahead to advocate for the introduction of more livelihood programs, such as eco-tourism, beekeeping, or agroforestry, to reduce dependency on forest resources. This study further recommends providing training and access to resources for sustainable income-generating activities.

5. To mitigate human-wildlife conflicts, forest owners and the communities around the forest should establish buffer zones between wildlife habitats and human settlements, implement measures such as crop protection methods, community wildlife scouts to keep watch of wild animals, and compensation schemes for wildlife-related damages.

6. Equip forest management teams with the necessary tools (GPS, GIS tools) and training to monitor and enforce sustainable practices. They should hire more forest patrolmen, get the communities involved in forest management, more staff to enhance the eco-tourism business and develop modern trails for tourists to explore and adventure in the forest.

7. As of now, there are no records of documentation conflicts, resolutions, and outcomes to ensure transparency and accountability, which the study now is recommending.

8. Lastly, the study recommends regular assessments of conflict levels, including the assessment of the integrity (physical boundaries and legal situation), and health of the forest, and community satisfaction. Itohya Forest should use a Use feedback mechanisms to adapt and improve the conflict redress system.

These, and many other recommendations highlighted in the report under various sections, sum up the set of recommendations for the conflict redress mechanism for Itohya Forest.

10.2   Conclusion

Successfully resolving human-wildlife conflicts, human conflicts, and policy grievances in Itohya Forest is a complex process that demands a well-coordinated, multi-stakeholder approach. The sustainable management of Itohya Forest requires balancing the needs of conservation, protecting biodiversity, and addressing the legitimate concerns of local communities who depend on forest resources. The conflict redress mechanism proposed provides a structured and inclusive process aimed at reducing tensions, fostering sustainable

coexistence, and ensuring long-term ecological and social benefits.

Human-wildlife conflicts, particularly with species like chimpanzees, baboons, and monkeys often arise due to wildlife raiding crops or damaging property. These conflicts can lead to economic losses for farmers and generate hostility towards conservation efforts. Successfully addressing these issues requires implementing wildlife monitoring and early warning systems will enable communities to prepare for potential wildlife incursions, thereby minimizing damage.

It will also require establishing a compensation fund, financed through government, NGOs, or ecotourism revenues, which helps to reimburse farmers for their losses, reducing animosity toward wildlife. Promoting alternative livelihoods, such as beekeeping or agroforestry, can also decrease the dependency on agriculture prone to wildlife damage. Lastly, it requires creating physical barriers, like fences or buffer zones, to help keep wildlife within forest boundaries, thus reducing the frequency of crop raids. Wildlife corridors and enriched forest habitats can encourage animals to stay inside the forest.

Conflicts between forest management and local communities often stem from issues such as illegal logging, charcoal burning, and disputes over resource access (e.g., timber, poles, and medicinal plants). Resolving these human-related conflicts involves empowering local communities through co-management and inclusive decision-making processes is crucial for conflict resolution. By involving community members in forest management decisions, they gain a sense of ownership and responsibility for the forest. It will require encouraging communities to engage in alternative livelihoods—such as small-scale enterprises, ecotourism activities, and sustainable agriculture—to reduce their reliance on forest resources and lower the potential for illegal activities. And, it requires establishing community-led mediation committees to help resolve disputes before they escalate, fostering a culture of dialogue and cooperation between forest managers and the local population.

Policy-related grievances often arise from issues like unregulated land use, unclear forest boundaries, or poor communication between forest managers and communities. Resolving these policy conflicts requires defining and communicating forest boundaries, as well as the rules regarding forest use, to ensure that both communities and forest managers are on the same page. This reduces misunderstandings and prevents conflicts over land ownership or access rights. Including community representatives in policy discussions helps ensure that their voices are heard, and their needs considered. This prevents future grievances related to the exclusion of local interests from policy decisions. And, building the capacity of both community members and forest managers to understand and navigate policies related to forest management strengthens governance and transparency. Training on legal aspects of forest use can also prevent illegal activities from arising out of ignorance.

The primary challenge in Itohya Forest is finding a balance between conservation efforts and the livelihood needs of the local population. This balance can only be achieved by fostering coexistence between humans and wildlife, while also promoting sustainable development for communities.

The success of the conflict redress mechanism hinges on long-term sustainability, both for forest conservation and community development. This requires a multi-faceted approach that integrates capacity building, continued funding, and partnerships.

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