Project Update: October 2009

The following activities have been undertaken.

Local Campaigns to Boost Farm Forestry

Setting up of Farm Forestry Advisory Service Groups
Two Farm Forestry Service Groups (FFASGs) were formed in Kooki and Kakuto counties, each comprising five individuals. These groups are responsible for disseminating information on the role of farm forestry to the communities as well its contribution to biodiversity conservation. They will give advice on nursery bed construction and management, and silvicultural practices, among others.

Introducing Social Farm Forestry Networks
Social Farm Forestry Networks are being formed by the help of the new created FFASG and by early next year it is projected that the entire district will have some knowledge about Farm Forestry and its roles.

Tree Planting
Rolling out tree planting to other areas based on the shared knowledge values in biodiversity conservation and improving rural livelihoods.

Tree nursery construction and planting of seeds was started in late April 2009. The parishes/villages of Kakuto, Kabonela and Kooki were the main stations. Enormous labour including site clearance; fertilization, seed collection, planting, and irrigation were done to keep the nursery beds healthy. The seedlings will be distributed for planting in late November 2009.

Education

Meeting with Local Leaders and Provision of More Extension Services
It is always a rule to meet with Local council chairpersons, opinion leaders and key informants before start of any project. As routine these meetings were carried out and the way forward was determined. The local leaders were very appreciative of the work and commended RSGF for their immense concern about nature conservation in the sub Saharan region.

Continued Training

Continued training is going on in the following areas:
- Silvicultural practices.
- Seedbed management.
- Fertilisation.
- Increasing patchiness.
- Increasing microenvironment.

- Secondary succession.
- Vegetation climax.
- General biodiversity conservation.

Research

Socio-Economic Factors Affecting Farmers' Decisions to Adopt Farm Forestry in Sango-bay, Rakai District

Exponential population growth in Rakai district has led to an increased demand for tree products (timber, medicinal herbs, firewood, etc) in the district resulting in high deforestation. Because the level of enforcement of the laws regulating the use of forests and natural habitats in the area is weak, the local communities have been depending on trees from their farms, neighboring areas and those areas in the wetland without replacement.

Our project has been educating local people on various silvicultural practices and the art of harvesting trees for home consumption without degrading the environment and destroying biodiversity. The scope of the work up this period has been various parishes of Kabira and Kyebe in Kooki sub-counties in Kakuuto and Kooki counties. From our research it has been noted that the art of planting and harvesting trees for home consumption in many of the parishes has not been adopted well to the extent of self reliance, indicating that more education and demonstrations should be performed to enlighten them more.

From the start this project was concerned with education, demonstrations, campaigns, and research. The research component aimed at identifying the socio-economic variables that affect the farmers' decisions to adopt farm forestry in Rakai district.

The maximum likelihood analysis results showed a positive relationship between age and the decision to adopt farm forestry. This indicates that age influences the farmers' decision to adopt farm forestry. The age of the farmer affected the farmer's knowledge and the awareness of the activities in the surrounding environment among other farmers.

The results showed a non significant positive relationship between gender and the decision to adopt farm forestry showing that males are not necessarily better adopters than females. Gender is thus not a critical issue in a farmer's decision to adopt farm forestry. That means that both males and females can equally adopt farm forestry if the right measures such as education and demonstrations are equally provided.

A significant difference was found between the level of literacy among adopters and non-adopters. That means that formal education is a vital aspect in the farmer's decision to adopt farm forestry and the fact that literate farmers would be adopters.

There was also a significance difference between in the adoption between those that were previously given lessons on silvicultural practices and demonstrations by the project team and

those that were not. That means that spreading out education about farm forestry, biodiversity conservation and various silvicultural practices in many new areas would influence the level of adoption positively.

Land size is an indicator of the available economic resources and the willingness to adopt new technologies. This often revolves around factors such as the risk, preference, capital constraints, labour requirement and the tenurial arrangements.

In agricultural zones, tree crops compete with cash crops with the latter being preferred. Farmers in high potential areas are unwilling to divert land available for food and cash crops to trees which do not generate an equally lucrative product.

Non-farm income incorporates income earned by the household from different sources other than the farm. It is apparent that a non-farm income source varies greatly. This included trade, employment, casual work, credit, relatives, friends and miscellaneous sources. That means that the off farm income earned by the farmer does not affect the farmers ability to adopt farm forestry. This is because its investment is low cost.

Furthermore, disposable income is the income that is left to the household to spend after taxation. It encompasses money accrued from different sources and used as expenditure for the household and savings. From the research, the household's level of income is a pre-disposable factor. It is not critical in the decision-making framework. Statistically, the decision to adopt is not based on the income level. This is attributed to the fact that tree seedlings are cheap and in other instances the farmers are given the seedlings free by organizations trying to promote Farm Forestry in the area, as is the case with Integrated Rural Community Development Initiative, in Rakai District.

Conclusions

The government working hand in hand with interested Non Governmental Organizations should put in place a clear policy that emphasizes on the need to promote farm forestry within a view of alleviating general poverty. Each of the socio-economic variables studied should be addressed at levels in which it affects the farmer's decision to adopt farm forestry. The policy implementation should be concentrated at the district level to bring it closer to the people. Promotion of farm forestry will help to reduce the imbalance in the market of timber and poles and make the marketing of the product efficient.

Both formal and informal education is vital in promoting farm forestry in the Rakai through educating farmers and the general community on its importance and the risk of deforestation. Attention should be focused on farmers/individuals over 55 Years who are mainly the decision-makers in most households, and conservatives in technology adoption.

Small-scale farmers should be encouraged to grow more trees and to commercialise this investment so as to diversify on their source of income.