Executive Summary

INTRODUCTION

Uganda has abundant natural wealth. Its varied wetlands, including grass swamps, mountain bogs, seasonal floodplains, and swamp forests, provide services and products worth hundreds of millions of dollars per year, making them a vital contributor to the national economy. Ugandans use wetlands—often called the country's "granaries for water"—to sustain their lives and livelihoods. They rely on them for water, construction material, and fuel, and use them for farming, fishing, and to graze livestock. Wetlands supply direct or subsistence employment for 2.7 million people, almost 10 percent of the population. In many parts of the country, wetland products and services are the sole source for livelihoods and the main safety net for the poorest households. Sustainable management of Uganda's wetlands is thus not only sound economic policy, it is also a potent strategy for poverty reduction.

Recognizing this, Uganda's Government was the first to create a national wetlands policy in Africa. Over the past decade, Uganda has also instituted the National Wetlands Information System, a rich database on the use and health of Uganda's wetlands which in its coverage and detail is unique in Africa.

This publication builds on those initiatives by combining information from the wetlands database with pioneering poverty location maps developed by the Uganda Bureau of Statistics. The new maps and accompanying analyses will help policy-makers classify wetlands by their main uses, conditions, and poverty profile and identify areas with the greatest need of pro-poor wetland management interventions. The information generated can also be fed into national poverty reduction strategies and resource management plans.

This is an innovative, pragmatic approach to integrating efforts to reduce poverty while sustaining ecosystems which has implications for improving policy-making in Uganda and beyond.

The publication is aimed at high level decision-makers and has two key purposes:

- To show decision-makers responsible for Uganda's wetlands where sustainable wetland management can have the greatest impacts on reducing poverty, and how community profiles derived from poverty maps can facilitate wetland interventions which better serve the poor. Maps of poverty and wetland indicators can serve as a bridge between different government sectors as they consider opportunities for achieving multiple socioeconomic and environmental objectives.
- To show decision-makers involved in poverty reduction how maps derived from Uganda's National Wetlands Information System can help to identify wetlands with degradation risks or economic potential, and show how these areas coincide with different poverty levels. Such knowledge can improve efforts to integrate wetland issues into poverty reduction strategies.

Mapping a Better Future: How Spatial Analysis Can Benefit Wetlands and Reduce Poverty in Uganda uses an innovative approach to integrate spatial data on poverty and wetlands use. Drawing on Uganda's rich baseline of wetland data and poverty mapping, the report provides a detailed examination of the links between ecosystem services and the location of poor communities and presents practical lessons for policy-makers across government. The report covers the following issues:

Background: A Brief History of Wetlands Management in Uganda gives an overview of the Ugandan government's efforts to date on wetlands management and its relation to poverty.

Managing Wetlands and Reducing Poverty: Issues and Challenges highlights the many benefits wetlands provide to Uganda's people, and introduces the latest poverty maps. It then summarizes how wetlands and poverty issues are addressed in Uganda's Poverty Eradication Action Plan and Wetlands Sector Strategic Plan.

Wetland Characteristics and Uses presents maps of permanent and seasonal wetlands and of wetland area per capita. It also examines main wetland uses as inventoried in the National Wetlands Information System.

KEY FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Findings

The maps and analyses in this publication are primarily illustrative, but do support the following conclusions:

- Detailed mapping of previously unused data confirms that wetlands provide multiple benefits in every district, and to every citizen of Uganda.
- The diversity of products obtained from wetlands in specific locations ranges widely, from a handful to up to 24 products; levels of harmful impacts on wetlands by people also vary greatly across the country.
- Spatial analyses of selected poverty-wetland indicators reveal no clear pattern at the subcounty level--despite popular belief that the poorest areas are always the most degraded.
- The overlay analyses of poverty and wetland maps are most useful for identifying subcounties that share similar poverty and wetland characteristics, and thus may lend themselves to similar wetland management approaches and intervention strategies. Economic studies that quantify the value of wetland products and services can be linked to poverty and wetland maps to gauge the economic potential of specific wetland uses in reducing poverty.

Recommendations

Further strengthening Uganda's supply of data and analytical capacity will provide major returns for the country's people and natural resource base by improving wetland management planning and prioritization efforts, especially in these two areas:

- Complete data entry and collection for the National Wetlands Information System, improve data consistency, and update wetland and land cover information.
- Strengthen analysis, mapping, and economic valuation efforts within the Wetlands Management Department.

Improvements in lives, livelihoods, and wetland health could result directly from this supply of new maps and analyses. Specifically, government agencies could use the information to act on decision-making opportunities in these four areas:

- Incorporate poverty information into the existing system for selecting wetlands for priority management interventions.
- Consider wetland management as part of local poverty reduction efforts, such as creating new livelihood strategies.
- Promote "win-win" collaboration to support poverty, wetland health, and other goals between agencies responsible for health, water, sanitation, agriculture, energy, and environment.
- Make poverty and wetland maps and their analyses a central component of local decision-making at district level.

Spatial Analysis of Wetland and Poverty Indicators demonstrates how combining spatial analyses of such indicators can improve the information and analytical basis for decision-making. These comparisons incorporate the diversity of wetland products and the impacts of wetland use.

Adding Value: Combining Wetland and Poverty Maps with Economic Analysis illustrates how the depth and benefits of these analyses can be further advanced by augmenting wetland and poverty maps with findings from economic valuation studies. A case study of papyrus harvesting's potential to reduce poverty is included.

Moving Forward: Lessons Learned and Recommendations looks ahead, describes lessons learned, and makes recommendations for stakeholders involved in poverty reduction and the sustainable use of wetlands in Uganda and around the world.