

- e) (lumbering, settlement, agriculture – particularly wheat and barley production) by adjacent community and private sector from within and outside the forest; Soil fertility depletion in arable land around the reserve and related community mindset and practice of encroaching on forest land/soils for agricultural production;
- f) Geographic location of Agoro-Agu affecting Trans-boundary Resource Management. NFA is faced with a challenge of hostile illegal forest resource users from South Sudan and Northern parts of Kenya would undermine the conservation efforts in the reserve on the Uganda.

E) Governance of the Platform

The platform operations are guided by a **Memorandum of Principles (MoP)** that provide for governance, membership, co-ordination and operation of the Platform. The MoP provides for a general assembly, Steering committee, secretariat, and membership roles and responsibilities.

i) The General Assembly

The general assembly is the supreme organ of the Platform where members meet to formulate broad policies and programmes, revise constitutions, if necessary elect executive members of the steering committee and decide on any matters of interest to the platform.

ii) The Steering committee

The steering committee provides overarching strategic guidance for the platforms engagements and also supervises the Secretariat. It's composed of composed of 7 members who include: *Host Institution, Cultural Institution, Kitgum Women Peace Initiative, Uganda Forestry Working Group Node for Northern Uganda, Lamwo Farmers and Environmental Conservation Association, Kitgum NGO Forum, and Forest Adjacent Community Representative.*

iii) The Secretariat

The secretariat has a coordinator who is responsible for implementing the programmes of the platform. The coordinator organizes communication and information shifting, advocacy and lobbying programmes

iv) Membership and composition of the Agoro-Agu Landscape Platform

The Agoro-Agu Platform shall be a consortium of civil society organizations (NGO, CBOs, and Faith based organizations), cultural and academic institutions, and individuals who are engaged in the promotion and development of forestry activities and practices in the Agoro Agu Forest Landscape.

A total of **sixty one (61) members** have been so far registered and are from both Lamwo and Kitgum districts.

F) Why Join Agoro-Agu Forest Landscape Platform?

Organizations and individuals join the Agoro-Agu Platform for the following reasons:

- a) To contribute to the ongoing forest sector reforms and developments;
- b) To share knowledge and experiences within and outside the landscape;
- c) To be linked to like-minded organizations to build synergies for information sharing and capacity building;
- d) To be part of the dynamic and focused network of Uganda Forest Working Group which is involved in advocacy and lobbying on forestry issues.

G) How to Apply

Membership application forms can be obtained from the **Coordinator Agoro-Agu Forest Landscape Platform at Agoro International Vocational Institute (AIVI)**. The members who express interest to join will be.

Contact:

The Chief Executive Officer – AIVI, Mr. David D'M. Oola,
Email: dmoola2012@gmail.com Or
The Coordinator, Agoro Agu Forest Landscape Platform
Mr. Lugai Peko John,
Email: princelugaij@gmail.com

Agoro International Vocational Institute,
P.O Box 548, Kitgum District, Uganda.
Website: <http://ufwg.envalert.org/agoro-agu/>

THE AGORO-AGU FOREST LANDSCAPE PLATFORM



A) Background

The Agoro-Agu forest landscape falls within the Agoro-Agu Sector that covers 17 central forest reserves – in Aswa river range.

Amongst these is the **Agoro-Agu Central Forest Reserve (CFR)** located along the border between Uganda and Southern Sudan, at $3^{\circ} 40' - 3^{\circ} 53' N$ and $32^{\circ} 42' - 33^{\circ} 4' E$, and an altitude ranging between 110-2700 M above sea level. The forest reserve covers a total of 26,508 Ha. It was gazetted in 1937, as a natural forest for biodiversity conservation. It also hosts other reserves such as **Lalak Central forest reserves** as well as the **Agoro Agu hills** which are cross boundary resources between Uganda and South-Sudan, encompassing districts of Lamwo and Kitgum. **See Figure 1** for further information about location of forest reserves in the landscape.

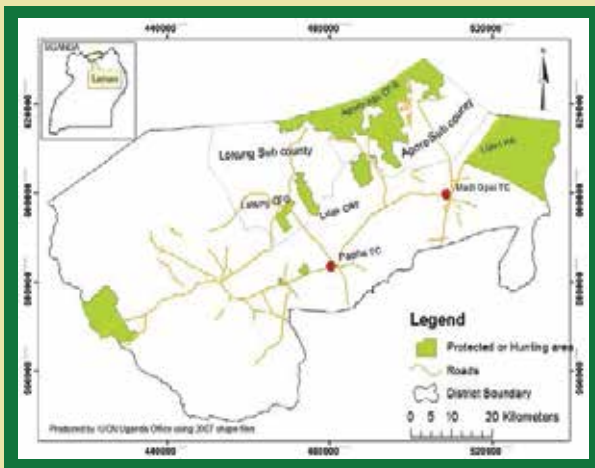


Figure 1. Location of Agoro-Agu Forest Reserve. Source: Socio economic baseline survey report for Agoro-Agu forest landscape, IUCN, 2015.

The existence of the undulating hills, swamps and valleys, the rich biodiversity (including *Bamboo and cycad plant, which is threatened species*), with glamorous streams and rivers (i.e. *Okura and Aringo streams and Aswa river range*) and the interesting political historical sites (such as *Uganda prison department, caves*) of the past regimes presents the landscape with great tourism potential and hence should be developed and promoted as a tourism destination for revenue and income generation, which will benefit the community and the nation at large. The community settlements and farmlands are located in the lower areas of the landscape. The most important livelihood base for the community is the natural resources in the landscape. The landscape is under great threat of degradation from various unregulated and illegal activities (charcoal burning, lumbering, agriculture) within the forest reserves.

Some of the key stakeholders mapped that have a direct influence on the natural resources management in the Agoro-Agu landscape include the National Forest Authority (NFA), Uganda Wildlife Authority (UWA), Lamwo and Kitgum District Local Governments, the Central Government, the Clan systems, NGOs, Village Savings and Loan Associations, Traders, and the Community.

Further information about the landscape is available in the Socio Economic Baseline Report (IUCN, 2015).

B) What is Agoro-Agu Forest Landscape Platform?

Agoro-Agu Forest Landscape Platform was instituted to secure agreed multi-stakeholder arrangements, measures and conceptual frameworks, to ensure the following principles:

a) *Efficiency in clarifying and protecting rights;* b) *Fostering participation and inclusion of the poor, resolving conflicts and delivering livelihood and forest conservation benefits for forest adjacent communities in the districts of Lamwo and Kitgum.*

A multi-stakeholder meeting was held on **15th of December 2014** that gave birth to the Agoro-Agu Forest Landscape platform. This first meeting served to raise awareness on the value of conserving the landscape whilst generating lessons to inform on-going national processes of the development of the national REDD+ strategy that aims for a harmonized and coordinated approach towards a climate-resilient and low-carbon development path for sustainable development. The platform:

- I) Provides space for information sharing and exchange on selected issues;
- II) Involves participation/involvement of different stakeholders with shared interest/goal around a shared natural resource;
- III) Targets at achieving a shared goal/objectives;
- IV) Has a clear engagement plan to achieve its goals/objectives.

The Platform comprises of stakeholders (such as *civil society, local government, cultural institutions, government agencies such as NFA, UWA*) that target to conserve the environment and natural resources within Agoro-Agu central forest reserve landscape through good governance and better service delivery. The platform provides space for the stakeholders to coordinate and jointly engage in policy lobbying and advocacy with a collective voice and also provides opportunities for capacity building through learning and information sharing so as to ensure evidence based advocacy towards good governance of the country's natural resources. However the Platform is not operating in a vacuum, but rather its engagements are linked with similar initiatives at the regional and national levels through *the Uganda Forestry Working Group (UFWG)1 regional node for Northern Uganda and Environment and Natural resources Civil Society Organizations (ENR-CSO)2 Network*, whose secretariats are

1 UFWG is a platform with a broad spectrum of stakeholders who play different yet complementary roles in their individual, collective and institutional capacities. These include field technical support, small grants management, research and products development, awareness creation, piloting alternatives, media publicity of issues and policy processes, public debate, advocacy and legislative lobbying, budget analysis and advocacy as well as independently monitor the implementation of the

hosted at Environmental Alert. These networks provide the space and linkages for presentation and discussion of the landscape issues into the national policy making process.

C) Objectives, Governance and Structures of the Agoro-Agu Landscape Platform

The Platform was established with a focus of addressing the following objectives:

- I) *To mobilize individuals, institutions and CSOs engaged in the forestry sector to support the implementation of the national forestry policy and national forestry plan;*
- II) *To advocate for promotion, compliance and accountability of government with respect to its policy commitments and private sector activities;*
- III) *To ensure that individuals, institutions and CSOs engaged in forestry sector progressively develop capacity in policy analysis, advocacy and independent monitoring;*
- IV) *To ensure that the implementation of the forestry policy and forest plan remains pro-poor focused and enhances sustainable use and productivity of the Uganda's forest estate.*

D) Key advocacy issues for the Platform:

The platform through its structures identified key advocacy issues, which inform their joint engagement plan development and implementation. These issues include:

- a) Inadequate staff capacity for NFA to conduct regular and effective monitoring and surveillance of the reserve;
- b) Limited security for NFA staff on Forest Patrol duties exposes them to risk of attack by illegal timber dealers;
- c) Unclear boundaries for the reserve and community resulting into encroachment and conflicts among the community and the duty bearers;
- d) Encroachment on the reserves through implementation of unregulated / illegal activities

Forest Policy commitments. Environmental Alert is the Secretariat of the UFWG.

2 The ENR-CSO Network in Uganda was founded in 2009 as a loose network with a diverse membership of CSOs in environment and natural resources operating at national and sub-national levels. Since then the Secretariat of the ENR-CSO Network is hosted at Environmental Alert.