



Supporting effective fire management in Uganda

Richard Ssemmanda, Michael Opige & Derrick Kamugisha¹

Introduction

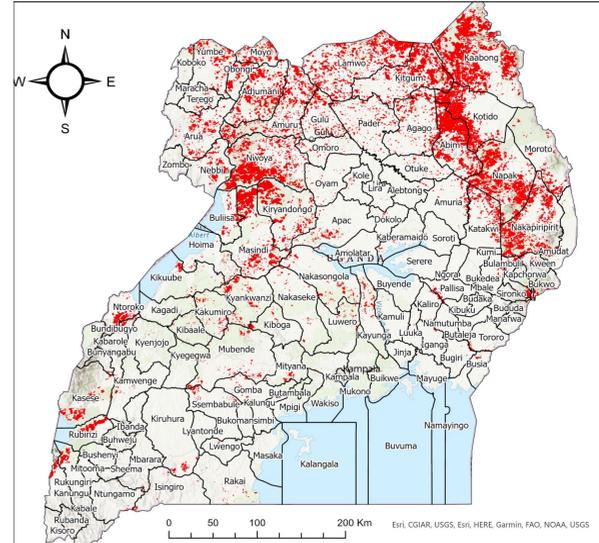
Wildfires in Uganda are nearly all human-caused, and some landscapes that once burned only at long intervals are now burning several times a decade, preventing ecological succession and degrading ecosystems. Human set fires, either accidental or malicious, pose a significant risk to biodiversity and to adjacent communities and their livelihoods. Uganda has a legal and policy framework to protect forests and other wildlife areas, but implementation is weak and laws are unevenly enforced. Protected area authorities also do not have clear and well developed strategies for combating wildfires.

Aims

The aim is to reduce wildfire risks through interventions by local stakeholders who will benefit from more sustainable management of forests, rangelands and farming systems. Beginning in the Bugoma landscape, local groups are understanding the impacts of wildfires, and will contribute to measures to prevent and control wildfires through landscape-wide platforms. Local communities, immigrants, civil society, local government, ministries, agencies and the private sector will jointly develop a robust wildfire management strategy and implementation plan. This will inform the development of a national strategy including response mechanisms tailor-made for different landscapes.

Stakeholder consultations

The focus is on local communities surrounding forests at risk, and immigrants and refugees that contribute to or are affected by wildfires. The Northern Albertine Rift Coordination Group (NARC-G) has been rejuvenated to act as the coordination platform in the Bugoma landscape. This includes those that set fires during hunting, honey collection and burning grassland for cattle, civil society working on restoration, agriculture and refugees, and the private sector affected by or contributing to wildfires, e.g. oil and gas, agribusiness and tourism companies. Crucial to success are district governments that enact bylaws and implement government programmes, and ministries and agencies directly involved in management, regulation of use of natural resources, e.g. the National Forest Authority, Uganda Wildlife Authority, National Environment Management Authority and the Office of the Prime Minister responsible for refugees.



Next steps

Effective planning at local, landscape and national levels requires a holistic approach rather than disjointed efforts, with a focus on effective coordination of wildfire management. The program will galvanize all actors, with a focus on stakeholders agreeing a clear agenda with complimentary and coordinated roles, to ensure that disparate groups work together on fire risk management planning and implementation guidelines to operationalize the strategy. In addition, the fire management capacity and requirements of concerned authorities are to be identified following a detailed gap analysis resulting, and these shall be highlighted for targeted training.

Based on the wildfire management strategy and plan for Bugoma being developed by researchers from Ecological Trends Alliance, the Uganda Wildlife Conservation Society and Makerere University School of Forestry, further stakeholder consultation meetings are agreeing a common vision for a national wildfire strategy, be scaled up and cascaded through a national fire management platform, supported by reviews and field-based wildfire assessments.



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¹ Ecological Trends Alliance, Uganda

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