

Executive Summary: Community Perceptions of Resilience and Conservation. PfR fieldsites Otuke and Napak

Final report, December 2014
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Above: Poster highlighting the dangers or overuse of local natural resources. Local parish leader explains the poster to villagers at a PfR sensitization on conservation. June 2014.

Background

This report is in partial fulfillment of the summer internship with PfR the summer of 2014. In both Otuke and Napak I interviewed local farmers, technocrats, and others about the perceptions of resilience and conservation in their community. In both fieldsites PfR had ongoing programs designed to increase resilience. Below I briefly summarize the perceived “best practices” and barriers to conservation and resilience. It should be noted that terms such as “resilience” and “conservation” were difficult to translate in interviews. Usually the translator stated he asked about resource use and environmental conditions and the ability to withstand disasters as analogues for the terms. While beyond the scope of this summary, semantic issues such as how people narrate “climate change” and “resilience” at the

community level in local languages is important for community level qualitative research to be aware of.

OTUKE



Above: Agricultural officer in Otuke explains the nursery program near saplings grown and donated by the government. Charcoal bags ready to be loaded onto trucks near Mt. Otuke.

In general, farmers in Otuke readily discussed the best practices toward and barriers to conservation. This can be viewed as part of the success of PfR's work. Many people stated they learned about conservation through PfR staff and sensitizations. PfR efforts to facilitate community discussions about wetlands preservation and tree cutting were evident in multiple sensitizations I attended. Most unique, was the successful efforts of PfR staff to integrate local political institutions into conservation based by-law designation. Local community leaders perceived this approach as being effective. At the village level people differed based on how they approached and explained "resilience".

Best Practices

- Villagers near wetlands were adamant in describing how encroachment had decreased drastically over the past two years. They attributed this to local persuasiveness that encroachment made the rains fall less.
- Villagers described the introduction of new banana species and education in farming practices, such as transverse tilling on slopes as essential to their increased income.
- Some farmers stated that intercropping was new to them and it was something they wanted more of because it increased their household income.

Passion fruit along with she-nut tree was one combination that could yield favorable results. Only two farmers had this combination, but both stated this was the type of conservation practice that PfR could help them increase.

- Nurseries have increased. With the integration of both governmental help through agricultural technocrats, and entrepreneurship of local people the local market conditions have begun to increase the planting of trees for profit.

Barriers

- Differences in how parish chiefs were perceived to enforce charcoal making and wetlands encroachment laws were often discussed.
- Concern over the incursion of people from other districts, especially to the east highlighted the overall concern with land tenure.
- Some villagers in the eastern parish villages had concern over a planned ranch for the president and the Ugandan army's partitioning of land.
- Local clan based conflicts over land tenure were reported to be increasing. The loss of elders from the war and the influx of newcomers was blamed for pockets of charcoal making and wetlands encroachment.

NAPAK



Above: Emmanuel, consummate hard working intern for PfR, helps with the hybrid goat program. A karamajong woman shows her UWA raid caused damaged household goods she says occurred because her village is inside the wildlife corridor.

Conservation efforts in Napak were situated mainly at the village level. Land security and local elder council decisions drive traditional resource use. As many of the local people had only recently settled into areas that are still being de-gazetted or gazette by the government perceptions of “resilience” were often framed as one of land tenure security and access rights to resources. Income increasing activities and climate aware livelihood programs are perceived as very successful by many

farmers. Of note were both the use of DRR groups and facilities as well as hybrid goats.

Best practices

- The hybrid goat program was the most popular program that people related to “resilience”. The hybrid goat education sensitization in Napak had the highest attendance and was the most diverse, gender wise, of any sensitization I attended in Uganda. Villages that had hybrid goats had only good things to say about the program. One village stated that children’s diarrheal disease decreased because they sold some of the second generation goats to buy supplies to build latrines.
- Local elder councils in one village had proscriptions against tree cutting for charcoal. One village over there was no such local prohibition. This showcases how local institutions can be utilized to increase conservation practices and thus resilience at the village level.
- As discussed in much academic literature¹, a mixture of agricultural-pastoralist practices is possibly the most resilient livelihood type for unpredictable climactic environments. In Napak there was a push for increased agricultural cultivation, but there remains a strong component of pastoralism. The traditional conceptions of land use for livelihood, as a community resource, is a strength for resilient communities that is inherent in Karamojong villages that was not present in Otuke.
- The PfR DRR groups are very active. One woman who was a member stated that they now have a building and a way to get help from PfR to get programs to help them grow more valuable crops. The use of the land around DRR centers was seen as a facilitating group labor that also educated people about different practices. Most farmers saw the DRR centers as a welcome part of the local community.

Barriers

- The number one barrier for conservation and resilience in communities in Napak is the continuing conflict over settlement in the wildlife corridor.
- A distant second is the stated concern by a few elders that charcoal making will increase as more and more people settle and move to Napak.
- Water access is also a concern. Many boreholes are scattered close to, or even in one case, within the contested borders of the wildlife corridor.
- Access to primary healthcare remains precarious. In an interview with the local doctor he stated that infrastructure and supplies were being choked from the government in order to force resettlement of local villages.
- Without a solution to these concerns, household resilience that is climate aware will remain a secondary concern in many areas in Napak.

Conclusion

Despite the historical hardships of people in Otuke and Napak, and the ongoing conflicts over resource use and land PfR workers and local leaders have achieved success in making communities aware of climate change, facilitating livelihood betterment programs and consistently educating whole communities about the possibilities that are within reach. The hard work of the ground level field workers for PfR can not be overstated. The hard physical and mental work these people do is astounding. The dedication of field staff living in Napak and Otuke should be lauded.