

PART II

LOCAL GOVERNMENT FORESTRY¹

1 Several aspects of local government forestry are also covered in Part I.

13 Policy and Legislation

The policy of devolution of local forest responsibilities to African Local Governments was pursued steadily from 1952 onwards, coupled with the building up of ALG forestry staffs. The Protectorate Government agreed to make a grant to ALGs in districts accepted as having a minimum Adequate Forest Estate (AFE), of half the net revenue accruing from CFRs in such districts. The total for 1951 and 1952 amounted to £4,593 and larger sums were likely to accrue in future. It was hoped that this arrangement would stimulate forestry activities in the districts concerned.

Difficulties were experienced in the evolution within the existing legislative framework of satisfactory forestry rules or regulations suitable for the management of forests controlled by ALGs and draft rules for West Nile and Acholi were held up on this account. In Bunyoro, Toro and Kigezi, LG forestry orders or rules were introduced during 1952. In Acholi, forest rules prescribing the fees payable in LFRs were gazetted.

In 1954, the policy of devolution was endorsed by the Agricultural Productivity Committee who considered, however, that the encouragement of small-scale private tree planting and farm wood lots in agricultural areas could be carried out more effectively through the agency of the agricultural extension services.

During the latter part of the year, the new District Councils Bill was under consideration and draft model district forest regulations were submitted. Although good progress was being made with devolution, DFOs had still to exercise a considerable amount of supervision in some districts.

AFE was declared in 1954 for Ankole, Acholi and Kigezi and in 1955 for Bukedi and Busoga. In some districts in the Western Province various steps were taken to implement the proposals for farm wood lots and peasant planting to be part of the agricultural extension services, while in others discussions were still in progress. In Kigezi, 15 village forests were given official approval and status.

As it had proved impossible for the one Ranger in Toro to supervise all district forestry projects adequately, the Agricultural Department agreed to undertake responsibility for all forestry works in the Busongora Agricultural Development area, a very satisfactory solution to the problem.

In 1956, Buganda was declared to have AFE. As a result, all CFRs in Mubende (90 sq miles – 230 km²) all reserves in North Mengo (the Singo Hills 154 sq miles – 400 km²) and

25 sq miles (65 km₂) of high forest in South Mengo were transferred to the Kabaka's Government. In the Eastern Province, in all districts except Bugisu, devolution of responsibility for LFRs and public land was virtually complete but because District Council Forest Rules had not been passed, special forest licences were not in use. In the Northern Province, the beginning of a forest service in Karamoja was made with the training of two nurserymen. A full service could not be started until a tree species had been found that would grow satisfactorily in the rigorous conditions in Karamoja and sufficient funds became available.

An amended and up-to-date policy governing LG services in Ankole for a number of years to come was drafted in 1956 and approved by the District Council the following year. Its main aim was to get the people to plant their own wood lots and not to depend on the local authority for their forestry needs. A similar statement of policy was made by the Kigezi ALG in 1957 and by the Toro and Bunyoro Governments in 1959.

The long-standing debate about local forest rules continued until 1961/62 when rules were at long last approved for Acholi, Kigezi and West Nile District Councils. Attempts the following year for Buganda, Busoga, Madi, Ankole and Toro were unsuccessful and there was a similar lack of progress in 1963/64.

Although it is outside the scope of this history, it should be mentioned that the Republican Constitution for Uganda brought about several changes, probably the most important for forestry being the transfer of forestry services formerly under District Councils and their integration within the Uganda Government Forest Department.