

WOMEN’S ROLE IN AGROFORESTRY AND FOOD SECURITY IN UGANDA

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Introduction

Agroforestry is a vital farming method which unites trees and shrubs with agricultural and livestock operations to enhance both sustainable land management and biodiversity conservation and improve rural community living standards (Bennell 200, Jose 2009, Bamwesigye et al 2024). Women actively participate in agroforestry success through their knowledge and traditional practices as well as their physical work, which leads to significant contributions to these practices (Okullo et al 2022). Full involvement and participation of women in agroforestry initiatives has remained limited due to many obstacles (Sserunkuma 2005, Nair 2011). The success of agroforestry practices in Uganda depends heavily on women who contribute through their traditional knowledge and labor and expert management capabilities. Women who act as traditional ecological knowledge holders lead the planting and preservation of trees and crops that strengthen both food security and environmental health, as well as rural livelihoods (Sserunkuma 2025, Nair 2011, Buyinza 2018, Bamwesigye 2025).

This research explored the roles and knowledge of women in agroforestry systems, and the various challenges they face within the community in Uganda. Our research results demonstrated how women's empowerment can enhance environmental sustainability, as well as income and food security supporting broader development and resilience objectives in Uganda.

Methodology

The research study employed a qualitative method. A Focus Group Discussion (FGD) method was used to examine the role of women in agroforestry in Uganda. The focus group discussions were carried out in two districts (Kampala and Wakiso) of Uganda. The FGDs were carried out in June 2025. The study comprised of eight groups, primarily consisting of individuals between the ages of 18 and 35. The groups had a recommendable number of participants, ranging from 6 to 10 people. More so, the time requirement of at least 60 minutes was observed. The study leader asked for group members herein participants for their consent to participate in the study. They all agreed to the study. Unstructured questions (Open-ended) were discussed by the group members and outcomes recorded and analysed.



Figure 1: Districts and Country of study



Figure 2: One of the studied groups

Group	Females	Males	Total
A	5	2	7
B	4	3	7
C	4	2	6
D	4	3	7
E	5	3	8
F	4	4	8
G	4	3	7
H	5	3	8

Table 1: Details of the Composition of the FGDs

Results and Discussion

The focused group discussions about women’s roles in agroforestry success agreed that women play essential multiple functions in this context. All groups confirmed that women take part in complete agroforestry processes as much as general agriculture, from preparing the land to planting and then caring for the trees until they are ready for harvesting. The tasks of weeding, tree pruning, and care duties belong to women because women play the most important role in maintaining healthy, productive agroforestry systems. Overall, all the groups agreed that Ugandan women perform essential agricultural work, but their roles remain defined by traditional gender expectations.

All groups agreed that women must be involved in agroforestry because it leads to sustainable environmental management and economic advancement. The collective responses demonstrated that agroforestry projects require women's knowledge, rooted in cultural traditions, to succeed in forestry and agroforestry. Cultural and traditional knowledge and skills about medicinal plants and land management held by women provide essential information that boosts productivity and sustainability and helps communities accept these projects

The discussions indicated that women in Ugandan communities encounter multiple barriers to making decisions about agroforestry, mainly because of deep-rooted social norms and cultural expectations and economic limitations. The restrictions on their right to land ownership, together with their exclusion from community decision forums, reduce their ability to make decisions.

Highlights:

1. Women actively participate in Agroforestry and Agriculture activities in Uganda.
2. Knowledge and Expertise: women conserve traditional knowledge about cultural practices necessary for agroforestry success.
3. Women significantly contribute to food security and livelihoods, and sustainable environmental and economic advancement in many tribes and clans in Uganda.
4. Ugandan women have limited decision-making power and land rights, which are often supported by cultural and social norms.
5. Policy and gender inclusion, as well as broader community support, are needed to harness the potential for resilience and capacity.



Figure 3: Common agroforestry system in Uganda (Coffee & Bananas), Women participation on farms and selling harvested products (fruits & food)