

**LOCAL USE OF SELECTED WILD FOOD PLANT SPECIES BY THE TEPETH  
COMMUNITY OF MOUNTAIN MOROTO FOREST RESERVE IN KARAMOJA,**

**UGANDA**

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## Abstract

The study was undertaken from September 2000 and February 2001 in three parishes of Lia, Kakingol and Loyaroboth in mountain Moroto Forest Reserve to assess the sustainability of the use of seven wild food plant species used by the Tepeth community who reside within the Reserve.

The species are *Vitex fischeri* Gürke, *Mimusops kummel* A.DC., *Sclerocarya birrea* (A.Rich) Hochst, *Balanites aegyptiaca* (L.) Del, *Ziziphus abyssinica* A.Rich., *Ficus sycomorus* L. and *Ficus Vasta* Forssk. The selected species have other uses that include medicinal, fencing, construction, cultural, crafts, and fodder and fuel wood.

Qualitative and quantitative methods, which included free listing, forest survey, interviews, forest walks with local knowledgeable people and those going for harvesting of the fruits, harvested for food were used in the assessment. The interviews were mainly through semi-structured interview.

The study also involved direct observation of harvesting and preparation of the food from these species through home visits. The study involved 167 households from which one person was interviewed. Informal discussions, home visits and direct observation were also used.

The results indicate that the selected wild food plant species are not evenly distributed in the three study parishes. The largest number of individuals of all the selected wild food plant species was found in the diameter size class of >10 (mature plants). All the selected wild food plant species are over-exploited and are locally endangered.

Food is harvested from mountain Moroto forest reserve as the most important resource although the quantities harvested for each of the selected wild food plant species varied greatly. *Ficus sycomorus* was harvested in the largest quantities and *Sclerocarya birrea* in the smallest quantities.

There is no direct relationship between the amount harvested and the abundance of the selected wild food plants.

The harvesting methods used include, leave harvesting, fruit picking, debarking, uprooting, extraction of sap and felling trees depending on the uses of the species in question and the parts used.

The ripe fruits of all the investigated wild food plant species are eaten raw but some are picked when ripe, dried, ground, and mixed with honey or ghee then cooked.

Seventy one percent of the respondents not been exposed to the conservation principles, which means that the harvesting is done without putting any conservation measures in place, resulting in unsustainability.