

WEAVING FOR TOURISM:  
WOMEN WEAVER GROUPS TURNING HOUSEHOLD BASKETS INTO INCOME  
GENERATION PRODUCTS THROUGH TOURISM AROUND KIBALE NATIONAL  
PARK

By

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A THESIS PRESENTED TO THE GRADUATE SCHOOL  
OF THE UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT  
OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF  
MASTER OF ARTS

UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA

2010

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To Lindsay Schafer Pankey and Tyler Grace Pankey. In loving memory, my angels in the sky.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to express my sincerest thanks to my advisor Dr. Abraham Goldman. He has been supportive in my transition to the Geography Department and has supported my efforts at the University of Florida. He has been patient, insightful, and encouraging throughout my research. I thank him for his support and contributions to my growth as a graduate student. While in Uganda, Dr. Goldman reminded me how to be patient, flexible, and remain positive, particularly when research didn't go according to plan. He challenged me to think like a geographer (something I am still learning to do!). Dr. Goldman has given tremendous academic and financial research support. I have enjoyed working with him immensely and look forward to continuing my graduate studies as one of his students.

I would also like to express my gratitude to my committee members who have guided me through course work as well as articulating my thesis ideas. Thanks to Dr. Brijesh Thapa, who challenged me through his tourism courses and has always been encouraging even when I had doubts. I would like to thank Dr. Barbara McDade-Gordon for her insight into basket weaving in West Africa and for her willingness to become a part of my committee when reshuffling had to be made. I would like to also thank Dr. Julie Silva, who was originally on my committee, but was conducting her own research overseas. Her continued support and encouragement have been extremely valuable. I value every long hour she has given me as I worked through my life as a graduate student.

I would like to recognize support for my master's studies by the National Science Foundation grant. I was given permission to study in Uganda by the University of Florida Institutional Review Board, Uganda National Council for Science and

Technology, Uganda Wildlife Authority, local council leaders and the amazing participants in the identified basket weaver groups. I am forever grateful to my field assistants Agaba Erimosi and Mwesigwe Peace. Without either of them, I would never be able to navigate the roads around Kibale or be successful in identifying my target groups. I thank them for their support, respect, humor and lifelong friendship. Many thanks for the support in Uganda – Omeja Patrick, Aerin Jacob, Krista Millich, Sarah Paige, Kate Mullan, and many others.

Finally, I would like to thank my family for their never ending support for me. I know that I have contributed many gray hairs for my desire to be in Africa. I thank my parents for encouraging my passions for life and allowing me to develop through experience. They have never once been discouraging. I would also like to express my most gracious appreciation to my husband-to-be, Scott, who has been a constant support these past few years. He never once complained about my having to leave every summer since we have been together; instead he supported it with his excitement and true understanding. He has supported my long hours at school with amazing meals and a listening ear. He has provided encouragement when I was down and didn't know how to get back up. And he has been there to see me through the many highpoints of my journey. I look forward to our life together and I look forward to the days where we can spend time together in our respective research areas. I came to school to get an education and I will be leaving with my best friend and the love of my life.

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Abstract of Thesis Presented to the Graduate School  
of the University of Florida in Partial Fulfillment of the  
Requirements for the Degree of Master of Art

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May 2010

Chair: Abraham Goldman

Major: Geography

This study examines a type of community response to tourism around Kibale National Park (KNP) in southwestern Uganda that involves adapting household basket production for an anticipated tourist market. Women's basket weaving groups were chosen as the focus of this study because of the increasing number of women's basket groups that have been and are being created since KNP became a national park in 1993 after having been a forest reserve for several decades. Women seem to be responding to economic factors that drive the need for more household income as well as seeking the opportunity to increase their own income and social capital by turning a domestic activity in which they already engage into a commodity for tourist consumers. This study is based on semi-structured interviews to learn more about group histories and management, craftsmanship, resource use, and trends influenced by tourism. Finally, emerging themes arose from the information regarding women's and groups' expectations, multi-purpose groups, marketability, and the effects of distance from the protected area. This initial study also identifies worthwhile issues for further research.

## CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

### **Protected Areas, People, and Tourism in Africa**

Throughout Africa and the rest of the world, there are debates about social and economic development within the context of wildlife conservation and environmental sustainability. Often, tourism is seen as a means to connect the economic development of a community with the conservation efforts of a protected area. Today, it is frequently argued that protected areas are not likely to remain without the support of communities that bear the costs of living adjacent to the protected area (K. Archabald & L. Naughton-Treves, 2001). Yet, the needs of people are often in conflict with the needs of a protected area and its conservation efforts—conservationists focus on protecting threatened resources while communities rely on the utilitarian use of those resources (Agrawal & Gibson, 1999; Stem, Lassoie, Lee, Deshler, & Schelhas, 2003; Struhsaker, Struhsaker, & Siex, 2005). In fact, some argue that the only way to protect these vulnerable resources is through a “heavy hand” of the centralized government as well as through market and private property rights (Agrawal & Gibson, 1999). Others argue that communities do, in fact, have ways of regulating their natural resource off-take and therefore may be better able to conserve natural resources than often assumed (Pimbert & Pretty, 1995; Western & Wright, 1994). Further, many agree that economic benefits should be spread among communities impacted by a protected area and that those who can make the most difference in conservation are not usually the same as those bearing the immediate costs (K. Archabald & L. Naughton-Treves, 2001). This often places conservation and human rights organizations in conflict over priorities, or at least presents them with a dilemma of how to meet both objectives without detracting

from either. For as many debates concerning the right actions to take, there are just as many community-based projects around protected areas that are trying to balance these goals.

### **Uganda, Tourism, and Craft Makers**

Uganda has articulated the goal of improving tourism for foreigners as well as for Ugandans (Figure 1-1). The varied topography of savannahs, temperate to tropical rain forests, and snow-capped mountains, offers much opportunity for different types of tourism. But cultural resources are also potential attractions. Uganda boasts much ethnic and cultural diversity, with 87% of people living in rural areas (Uganda Bureau of Statistics, 2002). Though agriculture is the primary sector for about 80% of the population (Bremner & Zuehlke, 2009), rural people are increasingly looking toward other opportunities to diversify their income (Lepp, 2004; US Peace Corps, 1998). Thus, as this need becomes greater, particularly for women who are trying to raise enough money to contribute to household needs, education, and the care of extended family and orphans, people living adjacent to protected areas are looking for opportunities in tourism to assist with this additional income.

Tourism has been consistently proposed as a development strategy (Lepp, 2004). Most of the proposed strategy has focused on conservation efforts outside and around protected areas. Uganda, though, is seeking alternatives to mass tourism that is popular in Kenya and Tanzania. The country is exploring alternative activities to attract tourists, including opportunities with cultural heritage. The general highlights of Uganda's cultural heritage are through cultural landscapes, sacred areas, cultural dramas, dances, as well as crafts. Crafts in Uganda are particularly highlighted throughout Kampala, other tourist towns, and in small shops near or in protected areas.

In Africa, a high proportion of these crafts are created by women in rural areas (Kepe, 2003). Much of the research focusing on African craft makers has been conducted in Ghana, Ethiopia, Botswana, South Africa, and Namibia. The focus of this study is basket weaver groups around Kibale National Park in southwestern Uganda and their efforts to benefit from tourism in the area.

This study seeks to determine how communities respond to tourism around a protected area, in part to investigate synergies between nature and cultural tourism. Basket weavers were chosen as a focus for this study because of the increasing number of groups that have been, and are being, created since Kibale achieved official status as a national park in 1993, having previously been a forest reserve. Women seem to be responding to economic factors that drive the need for more income as well as the opportunity to increase income through an activity in which they already have experience and turn it into a commodity for tourists. Some of the topics explored with these groups are the differences and commonalities among groups, how baskets weaving styles and techniques have evolved, and the importance of location for the basket making groups.

This thesis will discuss the following: 1. study purpose and research questions, 2. an overview of the literature regarding tourism, Kibale National Park and its surroundings, and basketry in Africa, 3. research methods, 4. the outcomes of the group interviews, 5. finally, the discussion section will share further research needs in this area.

### **Purpose of Study and Research Questions**

The purpose of this research is to explore how basket weaving groups around KNP are responding to tourism and their expectations of its expansion. The members of these groups are primarily women, with a few men associated with some of the

groups. Any male members participated in other craft work, so all those interviewed in this study were women. This research attempts to explore the following questions regarding how basket weaving groups are responding to tourism:

1. How are groups formed and managed?
  - a. What are the histories of basket weaving groups in the area?
  - b. What common features and variations do the groups display?
2. What are the motivations for entering the tourism sector?
  - a. What are the key economic features of basket production?
  - b. What roles do marketing outlets and tourism play in the economic potential of basket making?
3. How has basket weaving changed over time, particularly since tourism began to increase in the area?
4. What are the perceptions of tourism impacts on their communities?
  - a. What have been the impacts on cultural heritage preservation through basketry?
5. What is the groups' outlook on the future of tourism in this region of Uganda?
  - a. What are the areas for further research on basket weaving and tourism in the area?

As stated earlier, research has been done on craft makers in a few African countries including Ghana, Ethiopia, Botswana and South Africa. Other than a comparison evaluation on a community-based tourism association, there has been no research on basket weavers in Uganda. By examining basket weaver groups around Kibale National Park, it is possible to gain a better understanding of the interactions between nature-based tourism around protected areas and cultural heritage in Uganda. From these initial results, it is possible that further questions regarding craft makers, protected areas, and interactions with tourism can be formulated and studied.

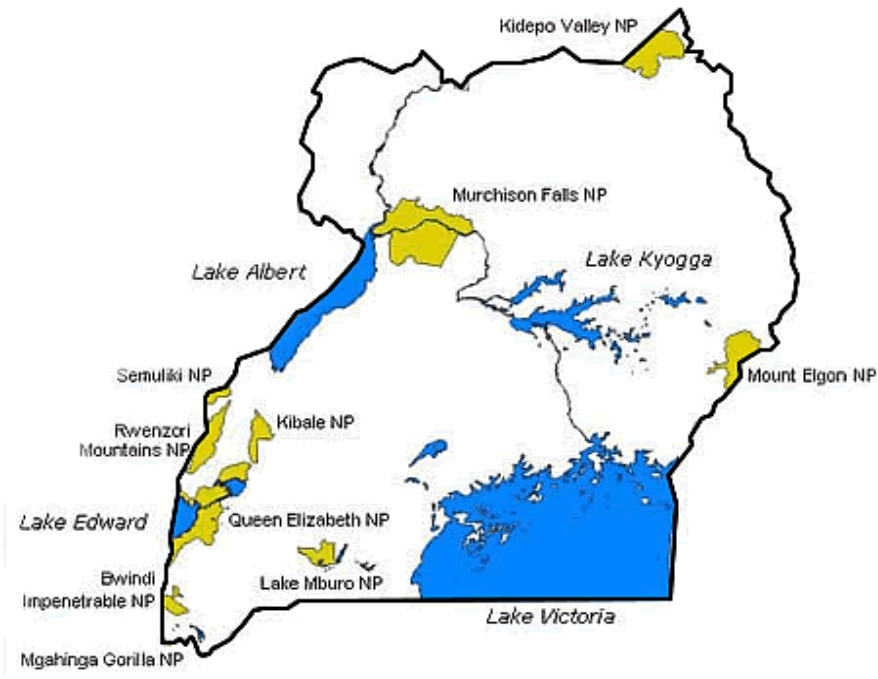


Figure 1-1. Map of national parks in Uganda, Uganda Wildlife Authority, 2009

## CHAPTER 2 LITERATURE REVIEW

### **Tourism and Uganda**

Forest ecotourism is a relatively new concept in Uganda and has been introduced to encourage conservation and derive economic benefits from protected areas (J. Obua & Harding, 1997). However, tourism is not new to Uganda. During the 1960s, Uganda received about 50,000 tourists per year and was one of Africa's major tourism destinations (Lepp, 2004). By independence, tourism was a major contributor to the economy. This was rather brief as 15 years of violence under the reign of Idi Amin and Milton Obote drove the country into the ground by killing thousands of Ugandans, driving out Asian merchants, and severing ties with the West. In 1986, Yoweri Museveni became president and helped to improve Uganda's image and improve livelihoods. In the early 1990s, Uganda's tourism industry began to slowly emerge and rebuild with this assistance of organizations such as the US Peace Corps.

Ecotourism is considered to be "symbiotic" with protected areas (Thompson & Homewood, 2002). Ideally, tourism that is well-managed should assist in protecting a national park as well as communities and their heritage (Eagles, McCool, & Haynes, 2002; Stem et al., 2003). In addition, other benefits like infrastructure are likely to improve which can bring better roads, access to markets and other modern technologies. Improvements to education and training as well as health care are also indirect benefits of tourism in (Eagles et al., 2002).

Tourism encompasses industries that offer accommodation, transportation as well as other kinds of services for those who come from a different area and are visiting for more than 24 hours but less than one year (Ashley, 2000). In developing countries,



tourism takes on several different perspectives. According to Ashley, four are easily differentiated: (1) economists usually see tourism as a means to macro-economic growth and generation of foreign exchange; (2) the private sector considers tourism as a commercial activity which puts product development, competitiveness and commercial returns at the forefront; (3) conservationists consider tourism to be a form of sustainable use of natural resources and a way to encourage conservation; (4) and for rural people, tourism is an element of rural development (2000). These perspectives are important in understanding how tourism develops in an area as well as understanding the stakeholders in tourism. Most often, development is associated with jobs and money and not necessarily with livelihoods (Holland, Burian, & Dixey, 2003).

For a developing country, tourism can be advantageous as a way to increase income and in turn, possibly improve livelihoods. However, to be successful, it depends on commercial, economic, quality of the product, accessibility, infrastructure, availability of skills, and interest by investors (Cattarinich, 2001; Roe, Ashley, Page, & Meyer, 2004). When considering other endeavors, tourism does pose some gains. Firstly, the customer comes to the “product” (Cattarinich, 2001; Roe et al., 2004). Rather than exporting materials from factories or from agriculture, tourists come to the area and are more likely to spend their money locally. Secondly, tourism can be more labor intensive than manufacturing and is likely to employ a higher percentage of women (Cattarinich, 2001; Roe et al., 2004). Tourism can call on the services of porters, guides, cooks, farmers, and furniture makers. Further, many farmers, cooks, and crafts people are predominantly female. Thirdly, where there are few competitive exports for developing countries, tourism can be a potential opportunity (Cattarinich, 2001; Roe et al., 2004).

Countries lacking in export advantages may possess natural landscapes that are appropriate for tourism development. Fourthly, tourism and its products can potentially be created on natural resources and culture—two possessions the rural poor population are likely to have in some places (Ashley, 2000). Tourism is likely to utilize the natural landscape of an area and possibly incorporate cultural aspects of the surrounding community.

### **Kibale National Park**

Kibale National Park is located in southwestern Uganda at the foothills of the Rwenzori Mountains along the Albertine Rift. Designated in 1932 as a forest reserve, it was upgraded to national park status in 1993 (Karen Archabald & Lisa Naughton-Treves, 2001). This 776 sq kilometer park is classified as a mid-altitude, moist tropical forest (Chapman, Struhsaker, & Lambert, 2005; Chege, Onyango, Drazu, & Mwandha, 2002) and has 3 major ecosystems: forests—totaling 45%, wetlands, and grasslands (Chapman et al., 2005; Spenceley, 2003). Kibale is noted for being an important water catchment area for Kabarole district and for lakes George and Edward (Chege et al., 2002). In addition, Kibale contains about ½ of Uganda’s total tree species—229 have been recorded (Spenceley, 2003). Thus, the park contains tree species that have been important to the timber industry as well as non-timber species for non-timber forest products (NTFP) (Spenceley, 2003).

The park boasts having the highest density of primates in the world—11 to 13 species—along with the largest population of chimpanzees at approximately 600 individuals (Spenceley, 2003). Kibale is further known for its bird species with 325 species recorded in the park with several that are endemic to the area (Spenceley, 2003). In addition, it holds Uganda’s largest concentration of forest elephants.

The location of Kibale plays an important role in tourism. The Kampala-Fort Portal road gives relatively easy access to travelers. Fort Portal, the closest town to Kibale NP, offers a number of hotels and lodges as well as restaurants and shops for supplies. It is the main hub in southwest Uganda to take off to any of the other national parks in the area including Queen Elizabeth National Park, Semiliki National Park, and Rwenzori National Park. Since Kibale is the closest to Fort Portal and is relatively easy to access regardless of budget, it is a very likely stop on the tourist agenda.

### **Communities around Kibale National Park**

When viewing Kibale National Park from satellite, one can easily define the borders of the park. The surrounding parishes are densely populated with two major ethnic groups—the Batoro and the Bakiga—both agricultural groups (A. R. Mugisha, 2002). The Batoro are said to be the native group while the Bakiga immigrated from the southwestern part of Uganda and were granted land to farm on the borders of Batoro villages, mainly to serve as a buffer zone from crop-raiding animals (K. Archabald & L. Naughton-Treves, 2001; Joseph Obua & Harding, 1996). The population density surrounding Kibale is estimated to be about 300 individuals/km<sup>2</sup> within 5km of the park boundary, with higher densities on the eastern side (Hartter & Southworth, 2009). In the past, communities depended on the forest for logging, hunting, cultivation, medicinal plants, firewood, crafts materials, and wild coffee (Chege et al., 2002). Some activity such as illegal extraction of firewood, fishing, and poaching still occur in the park. The biggest challenge for people bordering the park is crop raiding by wild animals, particularly elephant, baboons and other primates (K. Archabald & L. Naughton-Treves, 2001; Lepp, 2004; Naughton-Treves, 1997, 1998; US Peace Corps, 1998).

## **Basketry**

Handicraft production represents one of the few areas where it may be possible for women in rural areas to enter the international market with tourism (Ljunggren, 2007). Basket weaving in many parts of Africa is a skill usually learned by women in their youth and often practiced throughout life (Asante, 2005, 2009; Kruger & Verster, 2001; Ljunggren, 2007; Suich & Murphy, 2002). Many will be taught basketry in the home by their mothers or grandmothers and also in the primary schools (Figure 2-2). This skill set, traditionally used to produce utilitarian and ceremonial products for home use, may also be used by women to earn income from tourists and others (Ljunggren, 2007). These small craft industries are often viewed as being able to increase the incomes of marginalized people as they utilize the natural resources available to create a product that can potentially be sold for a significant price (Bishop & Scoones, 1994).

Basket weaving, much like other small craft enterprises, seems to be prevalent where raw materials can be tapped on a small scale (Arnold & Townson, 1998). The high number of people engaging in this activity suggests easy access of materials (Arnold & Townson, 1998). Basketry, like most secondary income generation activities, is part-time and is used as a supplemental income for families during low crop seasons, as a safety net, or in some cases for targeted needs such as school fees (Arnold & Townson, 1998). Even though there is relative ease of access to materials, highly skilled women, and potential tourism commodity opportunities, some areas may experience saturation of the market (Kruger & Verster, 2001). Without innovation in basket styles, colors, or access to larger markets, many of these basket groups may face challenges trying to satisfy their goals and expectations.



Figure 2-1. Woman with children making a basket

### CHAPTER 3 RESEARCH METHODS AND FINDINGS

In the summer of 2007, while conducting exploratory research on tourism around Kibale National Park, I was introduced to the variety of baskets for sale in the area. After returning, my interest in local women and basket weaving grew, and I reviewed the literature on basket weavers and other handicraft makers. Much of the research on basket weavers in Africa has been done in Ethiopia (Asante, 2005, 2009), Ghana (Ljunggren, 2007), Botswana (Bishop & Scoones, 1994; Cunningham & Milton, 1987; Kgathi, Mmopelwa, & Mosepele, 2005; Mbaiwa, 2004), Mozambique (de Vletter, 2001), South Africa (Kepe, 2003; Makhado, 2004), and Namibia (Konstant, Sullivan, & Cunningham, 1995; Suich & Murphy, 2002). Very little has been done on craft makers in Uganda with the exception of work done by Williams et al (2001) which compared Namibia's community tourism organization with Uganda's equivalent, the Uganda Community Tourism Association (UCOTA). My research aims to shed more light on the development and characteristics of this part time activity which may potentially contribute significantly to rural women's livelihoods, as well as Uganda's tourism sector.

Basket making groups were identified in several ways. Some groups were already known to me due to familiarity with the area as these groups were close to the Kibale National Park or known in Fort Portal. Other groups were identified when searching for tourist lodges. Some of the groups were identified during interviews with lodge owners and thus a snowball technique was used to identify the rest. Sixteen groups were identified over the course of eight weeks and interviewed as groups using semi-structured interviews (Figure 3-1). Groups are defined as having two or more people, and the groups that were interviewed ranged from 2 to 40 members. An attempt was

made to keep the group interviews small but usually all, or most, members showed up explaining that they were curious and surprised that any researcher was interested in talking to them about their basket weaving. For most groups, no researcher had ever expressed interest in their activities.

On average, interviews lasted about an hour, not including gathering demographic information, and covered a range of topics discussed further in the next sections (Appendices A-B). With larger groups, several women usually became the active voices of the groups but very often there was live and active conversation among all members in response to certain questions. Most of the questions were open-ended and whenever possible, follow-up questions in regards to interesting and new information presented by the groups were asked. Since I have only a very elementary understanding of the two primary languages spoken, Rutoro and Rukiga, a translator was used for all interviews.

There were some limitations to consider with this study. Not every weaving group is accounted for in the research area. This could unintentionally give bias to the study in some characteristics such as group make-up and motivations. Time constraints, accessibility, and transportation prevented further identification of groups in the area. Further, though this study has a focus on women, my translators were male. I could potentially have an issue with overlooked nuances that my translators may have not noticed and I could not pick out because of my lack of language. However, having male translators may have been more beneficial than a problem. Since this type of weaving is only done by women, my translators may have been perceived as not being a threat to the group. They were not interested in weaving. Therefore, it appears the women

were more at ease with the interviews since there was no perceived threat to their livelihoods.

### **Basket Weaver Groups around Kibale National Park**

Returning to Uganda for two consecutive summers, I observed some of the expansion in tourism in Fort Portal and around Kibale National Park. More lodges and locally owned hotels have been established and more basket weaving groups became visible between the two research sessions. The following categories are the compilations of interviews among the 16 basket weaver groups identified in the area. There are reportedly more groups in the larger area, but time constraints, travel, and scheduling made it difficult to interview more than these. It is not known how many basket weaving groups are in the area but I suspect that potentially 5-10 more groups could have been identified based on the information collected when identifying groups. A total of 291 women were involved in the sixteen groups interviewed, with an average of 18 women per group. Group size varied significantly, however, from two to a 42 members. Therefore, it is possible that an estimated 500 women could be involved in basket weaving groups within the proximity of KNP. This number does not take into consideration the number of individual women making baskets and selling them separately from groups.

All groups were willing to participate in the interviews. As stated above, many members were intrigued that any researcher would want to know about them, as they have not participated in research in the past. I was able to make initial contact with officers of the groups and return to interview the group at a later date. A rapport was created among each of the groups, therefore I believe this information to be as honest as possible considering the brief time I spent with these women.



Group interviews were reviewed and coded for thematic evaluation and compiled on spreadsheets to determine common patterns and outlier information on each group. Group demographics were compiled and analyzed as well to determine common patterns and outliers between groups. From this information, an analytical narrative about these weaver groups and their responses to tourism was constructed.

### **Group Histories**

Sixteen basket weaving groups were identified and interviewed over the course of eight weeks in 2008. Six of these groups were located on the east side of Kibale National Park along the main road to Kamwenge, an area where most residents are ethnically Bakiga. Ten groups were scattered on the west side of the park where the majority of residents are Batoro, though there are also Bakiga members in some groups. These groups were found either near the border of the park, in tourist areas, or relatively close to Fort Portal.

As stated before, the groups varied in size from a group of two to a group of 42 women with a total 291 women participating in these group interviews. Most groups had a formal constitution and governing officers including a chairperson, vice-chairperson, secretary, and treasurer. All the groups interviewed were established within the last 20 years: One was founded before 1993, before Kibale was established as a national park; two between 1993 and 1999; eight between 2000-2005; and five between 2006-2008. The oldest group was created at the suggestion of a US Peace Corps Volunteer who was sent to the area to assist in building community-based tourism on the east side of KNP. This Peace Corps Volunteer not only helped to establish this women's group but also assisted with the creation of Magombe Swamp as a tourist site, the set up of a

small hotel with a local villager, and a women's group that makes peanut butter (Lepp, 2004).

The basket weaving groups interviewed stated many motivations for establishing their groups (Table 3-1). Nine of the 16 groups (56%) stated that their main motivation was to improve their income. Some groups mentioned that basket making is their only reliable income. When probed further, many of the women mentioned that they are looking after orphans from other family members who have died from AIDS. Others hope to send their daughters to school with the income they get from baskets. Further, groups mention that since baskets are not perishable like food, they can be sold whenever there is a willing purchaser or as they say, "if one cannot sell one day, perhaps one's chances are better the next day". In sum, for basket weavers, baskets are more durable and last longer than perishable goods.

Another group claimed that basket making is the best way to rise above poverty. Six groups stated that they are together to help their families generate more income for basic household needs and for school fees. Half of the groups mentioned that this is an easy market to get into since many of them have been making baskets since childhood and materials are relatively easy to find. These statements are consistent with Arnold and Townson's (1998) findings about access and skill level of natural resource users.

Three of the groups mentioned high levels of orphans in need or had a high percentage of divorcees or widows in the group. One group was specifically made up of secondary school orphaned girls who say they are forced to find a means to make money, and basket making is the most reliable. Two of the groups mentioned that basket making was supplemental to farming. Particularly in times when their yields are

low or when there is a loss of crops due to crop raiding, baskets can last longer and will still sell even if they sit in a shop for a while.

The group members' ages, marital status, tribe, education, main occupation and year of arrival in the area are listed in Appendices A-B. Many of the groups were rather young: 65% of the women were under the age of 40 in these groups (Table 3-2). In other areas studied, a significant proportion of women participating in basket weaving for income were over the age of 40, often because younger women were pursuing other work options and/or supported by their husbands (Asante, 2005; Bishop & Scoones, 1994; Kruger & Verster, 2001; Ljunggren, 2007; Makhado, 2004). In addition, 55% of the group members are married. The remaining 45% of women are unmarried (13%), widowed (21%) or divorced (10%) and do not have a husband's financial support (Table 3-3). This high percentage of young members and unmarried members suggests that there may be few alternative income sources for women in the area. As a result, there may be more incentive for them to use craft production as a secondary income source.

This area of Uganda is relatively fertile with productive growing seasons, though farmers report their yields have been decreasing over the years (Goldman, 2007). Consequently, one factor in the growth of basket groups is that younger women are becoming involved because of a lack of employment opportunities for both men and women in the area as well as declining agriculture yields.

It is worth noting that when combining vulnerable status of either being divorced or widowed, nine of the sixteen groups had greater than 25% of their membership composed of these statuses. The group with the highest percentage of these two vulnerable groups also had the oldest members where 55% were over the age of 50.

This may suggest that as one ages, farming is more difficult so basket making is an important supplemental income, particularly for those who do not have family assistance. Research in other parts of Africa suggests that basket weaving can provide viable income to those marginalized by marital status and age. While this is interesting to include this in this study, the majority of women interviewed are married and/or under the age of 50. This will become more important later when cultural heritage of basketry is discussed.

Participants were asked to which ethnic group they belong. Sixty eight percent of the members of these groups said they are Batoro, 29% said they are Bakiga, and 3% said they are from other ethnic groups. On the east side of the park, three of the six groups are mainly Batoro though most of the people in the area are Bakiga (Figure 3-2): one group consisted of Bakiga, one was split half Batoro and half Bakiga, and one of the groups was composed mainly of other ethnicities. On the west side of the park, Batoro were the majority in nine of the ten groups interviewed while one of the groups was primarily composed of Bakiga (Figure 3-3). Historically, the Batoro have been in the area the longest with the Bakiga migrating in large numbers in the 1950s from Kigezi in the southwest (S. Mugisha, 2002). Both ethnic groups are subsistence farmers with distinctly different ways of farming, but both grow crops such as bananas, sweet potatoes, beans, millet and sometimes engage in cash crops like tea (Hartter & Boston, 2007; Kakudidi, 2004; S. Mugisha, 2002).

Education was another factor considered in the composition of groups. Very few groups contained members with a secondary education level or higher (Appendix A). Overall, only 18% of the women interviewed in these groups had achieved a secondary

level education or higher. In fact, all but one group had members with a primary education or less. In 12 of the 16 groups, over 75% of the members have a primary level education. A few of the groups mentioned that their education held them back from doing other kinds of work. They indicated that basket making was one of the most reliable ways to make money for those with little or no education.

Group members were asked to state their main occupation(s) (Table 3-3). Major categories were determined based on the answers: 1. Handicrafts; 2. Handicrafts and farming; 3. Handicrafts and other profession; 4. Farming; 5. Farming and other profession and 6. Other profession. To clarify, handicrafts refer to any crafts made by hand including baskets, mats, or jewelry. All participants were basket weavers though some also created other types of handicrafts. About two thirds of the individuals identified that both handicrafts and farming are their main occupations. Combining this percentage with those who report that their main occupation is handicrafts only (10%) and handicrafts and other profession (4%), about 80% of women are reporting handicrafts as a significant source for income. Since my focus is on women basket weaver groups, it is not surprising that this is the case and may not be representative of the rest of the population around KNP. It does, however, emphasize how significant handicrafts are for these participants.

Group members were asked when they arrived to their current place of residence in order to learn about their migration histories (Table 3-4). For women between 18 and 40 years old, 62% were born in their current homestead and others didn't arrive to their current home until the 1980s-2000s. For women over 41 years old, only 30% were born in their current homestead. There was some migration in the 1950s and 1960s but

more women arrived to their current home in the 1970s (24%) and 1980s (16%).

Historically, this area has had one of the highest population growth rates in the country (Mulley & Unruh, 2004).

An interesting characteristic that emerged while interviewing the groups was in the names of the groups. Much of what is in the name relates to the motivations of the groups. Ten of the 16 groups included special names beyond handcrafts. For instance, several groups included orphan or orphan care, like Kasenda Orphans' Care Group, stating that one of their goals is to provide for orphans in the community or the ones already under their care. Some groups had components of family in their name like Parents Concern Rescued Families Association, emphasizing the need to better care for their families. Some groups also included environmental names, like Kamwenge Ecotourism Association, proclaiming their desire to educate their community on safe ecological practices and encourage better farming practices. These particular names, while having personal meaning to the groups, may also play into their advantage in the tourism business which will be discussed further in the discussion section.

### **Group Management**

The groups interviewed exhibited some formal organization. All groups, except the group with two members, had elected officers: chairperson, vice-chairperson, secretary, treasurer and sometimes other officer positions such as orphan chairperson. Each group has their meeting days and locations where the group gets together for information about upcoming events, pay fees, and provide general updates about shop success. This is the time they also weave together. Several groups mentioned that this is their opportunity to learn different patterns from each other and to practice their

weaving skills. Other than at the meetings, group members are expected to produce their baskets in their spare time at home.

Groups were asked if there had ever been any struggles or problems with managing their group or money. Overwhelmingly, all groups claimed that they have a lot of trust in their members and have never been “cheated” out of money for their baskets. They all claimed that their members are elected by voting and they feel this is very fair. Problems only seem to arise when discussing how and where to sell their crafts. These particular problems will be discussed in later sections.

### **Group Registration**

The Uganda Community Tourism Association (UCOTA) was created in July 1998 in order to work with already established groups in the tourism sector after the establishment of national parks and gorilla tourism (Williams et al., 2001). UCOTA promotes community groups that have established accommodation and food services as well as other forms of tourism enterprises including handicrafts, music, dance, and dramas. With the opportunity of including heritage tourism, craft makers may be able to market their products to both locals and tourists, sell their crafts outside the community in other shops around the country and potentially export them to international buyers (Williams et al., 2001). Further, UCOTA is expected to provide each registered group with technical advice, marketing and training, and the continued encouragement of community-based tourism.

Groups were asked if they are registered with the Uganda Community Tourism Association (UCOTA). Of the 16 groups interviewed, four are registered with UCOTA, one is registered with the Kibale National Tourism Association, and two are in the process of registering at the district level. Of the four registered with UCOTA, two are

on the east side of the park and two are on the west side of the park. Registration is relatively straightforward, only requiring submission of the application and payment of a group fee of 30,000 USH (approximately US \$20). When asked why other groups were not registered with UCOTA, most of the groups claimed that they did not have any knowledge about the organization, which is supported by a conversation with the UCOTA director about the struggles to promote the organization (Tinka, 2008).

The groups registered with UCOTA have different experiences in selling their products. Those residing in Bigodi town have participated in the export of their baskets. These groups state that they are requested to make a certain number of baskets based on size and style. While they acknowledge their ability to potentially make more money from exporting, they complain that their baskets are not always accepted because they are not the right size or meet the expectations of the buyer, and they cannot sell the baskets for as much money as they can in their own shops. However, the money is mostly guaranteed. Sometimes, the buyers will cancel an order even when the weavers have started making the product. This experience may cause animosity toward working with international buyers in the future or discourage participating in export orders organized by UCOTA. When the order is too large for the groups registered in Bigodi, other registered groups in the area are asked to participate. One of the groups that is registered on the west side of the park mentioned that they received a request and a contract to make baskets for exportation but this was only one time.

All groups were asked if they had ever held a contract with a lodge or tour operator, and all said they have not. One group mentioned that they have a “verbal agreement” or “local agreement” with a tourist site that states they are the only group



allowed to sell their baskets at that location. Another group is consistently requested to visit a lodge when there are a large number of guests visiting. When this happens, the group will arrive at the lodge to sell their crafts. Five of the 16 groups say they do not have a contract but are able to sell at their own shop or bring their baskets to shops or lodges to sell. One group exclusively brings their crafts to a lodge where the lodge receives a small percentage for housing their crafts, though there is not contract or quota for the number of crafts. Those selling to shops complain about owners raising the asking price for a basket so that he/she may also gain a profit. But group members claim that by doing this, their baskets may stay longer on the shelf than had they been sold for the asking price. Another issue is that when women come to collect their money, the shop owner may ask them to return at a later date, thus delaying payment.

### **Money Handling**

Groups have various ways to handle money. The secretary or treasurer, likely someone with a secondary school education, will handle the money for baskets. In all the groups, not everyone knew how to do the bookkeeping. Six of the 16 groups have someone trained or have the schooling to understand basic math. A couple of the groups' bookkeepers are "self taught". When asked if they had any problems with money, all the groups said no. Members of the group claimed to receive the money expected for their baskets when they were sold. However, nine out the 16 groups did mention that their main issue with money is not receiving the asking price for their baskets. Groups mention that both locals and tourists try to bargain for lower prices. Prices can be negotiated as much as 30% off the asking price of a basket. One group mentions that when many baskets are bought together, the baskets will sell for less.

Nonetheless, there is a significant amount of trust among members of these groups when it comes to money and supplying materials. None of the members was worried about being cheated by another member of the group, only more concerned with this by outsiders. All groups expressed cohesion and trust which is significant in potentially being successful as a group.

### **Group Decision-Making**

Decision-making is typically done at the meetings with the participants of the group. Group decisions are primarily made about membership fees, any monthly dues, how to use the money from dues, and loans. Many of the women in these groups struggle financially. Nine of the 16 groups had more than 25% of members labeled as widowed or divorced. Fifteen out of 16 groups had more than half of members with only a primary education. Any support that can be given by the group is important to these women.

Much of any group decision-making is the result of requests for loans by members. Typically, the groups keep some sort of account for their money. Any member may request a loan from the group for any amount of money. Sometimes there may be stipulations on how much money is given, how it's used, and the timeframe to pay it back. In some groups, no deadline may be given to pay back a loan. The important part of this decision, according to the groups, is that the group as a whole will determine if a member is granted the money requested and for what amount. Often, the amount requested by a member isn't what is available but the groups may still give all of the funds it currently has. Members of one particular group stressed that it is important to help each other in times of need and be a support system. This need to help one another can foster trust and cohesion among members of a group.

## **Challenges and Successes of Groups**

Most of the groups were able to discuss their challenges and successes as a group. For the challenges (Table 3-5), 11 of the 16 groups stressed demand from markets is low and is a major challenge in promoting baskets. Several groups live close to tourist areas but with little communication or commitment from lodge owners, it may be difficult to sell their baskets. Further, groups have expressed problems with shop owners increasing the price of the baskets in order to also gain a profit which increases the possibility that the baskets will sit for a longer period of time on store shelves. Still other basket groups are in areas that receive few tourists. While these groups do not seem to be competing with other groups, tourists rarely travel to and are unaware of the area in which these groups live, or they are too far away to make the travel worthwhile. If a group does not have a place to house their baskets, many women will store them in their homes until group members can bring them to a shop for sale. Otherwise, members may attempt to sell baskets on their own if money is needed. The other concern is with the increasing number of groups in the area and the perceived low numbers of tourists. This combination increases the perception that the market is low and potentially unsuccessful. However, many of these groups stress that they have limited opportunities for generating income so even if the market for baskets seems problematic, they continue to make baskets for sale.

Ten of the 16 groups mentioned that they do not always have materials available to make baskets. Some materials must be bought because the plant material is unavailable in the region. Group members also reported that millet isn't always available because it has one growing season per year. If they cannot get the millet stems from their gardens, they must buy them. One group claimed that villagers are

recognizing that women groups are making a profit from their basket making, so now the farmers are asking for money or labor when women ask for the millet stems. Further, neighbors with swamps on their land are charging for the harvesting of papyrus because of the popularity of baskets as a tourist item. How women acquire their materials will be discussed later in this paper.

The other major challenge involves the occupational hazards of basket making. Seven of the 16 groups mentioned poking their fingers with needles, and five of the 16 groups mentioned chest pain from the work. Basket making is physically demanding, requiring long hours hunched over a basket to achieve the appropriate tightness of the weave. Often the weaving is done with a spear or needle with which many women poke their fingers in the process.

Economic benefits from basket making are commonly stated as a success by the groups (Table 3-1). The majority of groups report that their success has been that women are able to look after their families better than they could before they made baskets for tourism. Women are able to buy household items like sugar, soap and food as well as save money for school fees, school supplies and uniforms. Several of the groups mentioned that their women are much healthier than they were at the beginning of their membership because of the extra income.

Some of the groups mention other successes beyond caring for their families. One group stated they were able to purchase two sewing machines in order to add tailoring as another skill set to their group. Two of the groups said that as their membership has increased, coupled with the length of time the group has been together, their weaving skills have improved. In particular, they have learned new color

schemes and basket designs from each other. With this improvement, they say their number of customers has increased, and more women are making baskets. Other groups have been able to contribute money to build school blocks or organize competitions among their group members. One group has been able to buy land to construct their own shop in which to sell their baskets. And a couple groups have been able to open up a savings and credit account for the group and individuals. With this account, women are better able to save for illness or the group is able to provide loans to its members. One group in particular has a formalized savings and credit scheme for every member of the group whereas other groups have an informal procedure for extending loans to any member of the group. These perceived successes of the groups seem to encourage their continued involvement in market-oriented basket making and suggests their hopes for further increases in tourism in the area.

### **Economic Features of Basket Making**

#### **Labor**

Basket making is labor intensive for any individual. Bishop and Scoones have found the collection of materials as highly inconstant and dependent upon the proximity, accessibility and abundance of materials (1994). Further, Kgathi et al suggest that the increase in labor time when collecting resources is correlated with scarcity of that resource (2005). Collecting materials, according to the groups interviewed, takes on average four hours. Groups noted that they can spend anywhere from two to six hours searching for and collecting materials. Nine of the sixteen groups interviewed feel that their resources are decreasing. This perception of decreasing resources and the distance traveled to collect materials may suggest, as Kgathi et al (2005) have found,

that resources may actually be declining. Further, competition for these materials from other groups may be driving the perceived scarcity of materials.

The distance to collect materials must also be factored into the labor. Groups and individuals travel an average of 3.5km to collect materials for their baskets (Bishop & Scoones, 1994). Bishop and Scoones also note that there is uncertainty as to the amount of materials collected on one trip (1994). Likewise around Kibale, most groups say they collect materials on average once every three months, because they collect as much as they need to make as many baskets as possible.

Another part of the process is making the dye for baskets. The brighter colors that may be featured on a basket are typically artificial and are bought from the market in the form of a powder. The buyer can either buy a packet or a spoonful. This powder is mixed with boiling water and then the weaving materials are placed in the pot to absorb the dye. This process takes anywhere from 10-30 minutes depending on the shade of the color desired by the maker.

Many groups have opted to use natural dyes. The colors come from roots, leaves, and flower seeds (Figure 3-4). Appendix B shows the plant materials used and the colors they create. Mothers and grandmothers used artificial dye colors in the past but the natural dyes are making a comeback because of perceived tourist demand. Natural dye colored baskets are often more marketable for their assumed eco-friendly make. The process for making natural dyes takes longer than the powder and most do not have the intensity in color. The groups interviewed stated that natural dyes can take from one hour to two days to make. Natural color is made the same way as artificial—boiling water and adding the plant material for the color. In addition, sulfur or ash may

be added to change the color or to add brighter intensity. The added length of time involves searching for some materials and preparation for color extraction. Though natural dyes may be more desirable to tourists, more research is needed to determine if the labor costs to make the dyes is worth the demand for the perceived “eco-friendly” make.

Finally, making a basket can take one day to two weeks depending on the size, shape, and design pattern (Figure 3-5). Appendix B shows the kind of baskets weavers make and the length of time it takes to complete a basket. On average, an individual within the group can make about seven baskets a month although the most common is three to four baskets. Again this depends on the size, shape, and design pattern that the craft maker is creating. Further, the time available to spend on making baskets can vary which has been found by other research as well (Bishop & Scoones, 1994; Ljunggren, 2007; Makhado, 2004). Basket making is done in between other work such as caring for children or farming. Some women can only give two to three days a week to making baskets while others are able to find time to work daily. The length of time in a sitting also varies from 30 minutes to six hours. On average a woman may spend four days a week on making baskets and an average of 2.7 hours at each sitting.

### **Tourist Market Impacts**

Determining the impact of tourist markets for basket making in this region is still in early stages of understanding. However, there are some trends that appear to be occurring with this new wave of tourism to the area.

Basket design and shape seem to be influenced by the tourist buyer (Figure 3-6). More often, craft makers are making smaller coffee bean baskets and medium sized millet baskets as well as small, medium, and large plates for tourists. These shapes

and sizes make them easy to pack and transport. Other shapes, such as oval baskets and trivets are new styles that were not previously made or used in the Ugandan home but are now made for tourists. These newly made styles are slowly making their way into the homes of craft makers. These new shapes have appeared at tourists' requests.

Tourists also seem to have an influence on colors chosen by craft makers (Figure 3-6). During our interviews, groups noted that baskets made with natural dye color sold the best. They say tourists prefer them over artificial dyes. Few could give a reason for this but a couple of groups mentioned that tourists like the all-natural baskets and believe them to be environmentally friendly. Because of this, many groups are trying to relearn the methods of making natural dyes and planting the plant materials around their homes. At this time, it does not appear that the design is influenced by tourists. Some groups mention that the swirl design and flower designs are popular but tourists will still buy other designs they find attractive.

Skill, according to the groups interviewed, is determined by the tightness of the coils, the neatness of the weave, and the "beauty" (design) of the basket. These characteristics that determine price and marketability have been found to be true in other parts of Africa (Asante, 2005; Bishop & Scoones, 1994; Ljunggren, 2007; Makhado, 2004). However, it is still difficult to determine if shops around Ft. Portal, which sell these baskets, use these criteria when determining price.

### **Marketing Experience**

Most groups have very limited marketing experience when it comes to selling their baskets. The groups affiliated with UCOTA have the ability to sell their baskets overseas when orders arrive. Other groups market to local shops and lodges while other groups try selling at their own shops or on the side of the road. Similar options of



marketing baskets were determined in Asante's research on the Harari basket weavers (2005).

Of the groups interviewed, only four are affiliated with UCOTA—two in Bigodi, one on the west side of the park, just outside the KNP border, and one on the main road to Queen Elizabeth National Park. Each group sells on their own—three having their own shops while the fourth houses their baskets at a local lodge but is in the process of building their own shop. When an order is placed, the order is outsourced to these groups with specific guidelines as to what the buyer is requesting. It is not clear how groups are chosen to fulfill basket orders for export clients. Baskets that are not made to the specific guidelines are not accepted, according to the UCOTA-affiliated groups. Sometimes the desired quantity cannot be met within the timeframe requested, even if the quantity is distributed over several groups. Kruger and Verster noted this as being an issue for their study group in South Africa and suggested that groups combine forces to meet the quota (2001). Yet, despite having several groups work on an order, it seems they still struggle with demand, quality, and ability to create the quota in the time requested because basket making is a supplemental source of income for the members. Another issue these groups face is when they are asked to make baskets for exportation and the buyer cancels during the making process. The next option is to try to sell this basket in their shops.

Many of the groups will try to sell their baskets to shops in Fort Portal. With this process, the craft maker will bring the baskets to a shop and the owner will choose the ones he/she wishes to display. Most of the time, the women are not paid until the basket sells. One of the main complaints with this process is that the craft maker will

ask the shop owner to sell the baskets at a specific price but the owner will attempt to make a profit and increase the price. Many women complain that by doing this, their baskets stay on the shelf longer and they may lose “fast money” because the tourists do not want to pay the increased price. Another complaint about working with shop owners is that oftentimes, craft makers will be asked to come back at a later date because the shop owner does not have the money to pay them. This increases the inability to make ends meet for the household.

Though some groups will sell their baskets in lodges, none of the groups interviewed had a contract of any kind with any of the lodges. One group had what they called a “local agreement” with a tourist site in which no other basket group could sell their crafts at this particular site. Another group is only called upon by the lodge owner when her lodge is at capacity. Then the women will gather at the lodge to sell their baskets. Another group sells their baskets at a lodge where the lodge takes a certain percentage of the group funds as a “housing fee” for providing space for the baskets. While this seemed to be holistically agreed upon, the lodge does not receive many tourists due to its location and distance from the entrance of the park.

Most of the groups stressed that the market was a struggle for them. Research in other African countries also mentions a need to expand market outlets (Kgathi et al., 2005; Kruger & Verster, 2001; Makhado, 2004). The groups interviewed stated there are many groups around creating competition and there are not many tourists. They know their baskets can sell but they want a better and bigger market. With the lack of contracts or agreements with lodge owners, this proves difficult. Working with lodge owners may improve their capacity for marketing effectively since lodge owners are in

the business of bringing tourists to their lodges. It's surprising that lodge owners and basket making groups are not working together to better improve their marketing strategy.

## **Craftsmanship**

### **Basket Types**

Much of what basket makers around Kibale National Park produce are the traditional baskets found in the home that are often for practical use rather than for ceremony or decoration. Basket types are based on the shape of the basket. On average, groups stated there are 6 types of baskets used in the traditional household. In addition, the wedding basket, bucket basket and trivets were mentioned as being made prior to tourism but less common as they are ceremonial or used for decorating. These types of baskets are still being made by several groups, just typically not sold to tourists. Millet baskets are primarily used to hold *posho*, cassava meal, or *matooke*, mashed banana, the main staples at Ugandan meals. These baskets maintain the heat and are easily cleaned. Millet baskets, when used for meals, can last two to three years. Coffee bean baskets are used for holding coffee beans. When guests visit, these baskets are often passed around and everyone takes a bean to chew. Plates are used for a variety of purposes such as formal table setting decorations and to hold breads and other food items. The millet cleaning baskets are less decorative and more utilitarian in their use.

Few of the groups mentioned any baskets that are no longer made. If they did, it appeared that the basket was no longer made by that particular group since the basket was mentioned by other groups as a basket still made today.

## **Basket Design**

Throughout the area surrounding Kibale National Park, one can see common patterns in the designs of baskets. When asked how a basket maker determines the design on a basket, overwhelmingly, all groups say that it is at the “will of the maker” to come up with the pattern (Figure 3-7). Three groups also mentioned that they copy each other or listen to the request of the buyer. It seems that many of the designs are learned from their mothers and grandmothers when they begin learning how to make baskets. Traditionally, little color was used in the past and designs were simpler. Women over 50 can remember their mothers and grandmothers using color, both natural and artificial. Common patterns prior to tourism are the swirl patterns, zigzag patterns, diamond-shaped patterns, flower-shaped patterns, rectangles and checkered patterns. Groups note that these patterns are still used but the exception is they use more colors in the design.

Use of certain colors does not appear to have any community or family importance. Colors are chosen by a maker through her own preference, the request of the buyer, or by observing what colors and color combinations sell the best.

## **Technique**

Making a basket is long and tedious work for any basket maker. After materials are prepared, a basket maker will set papyrus as the frame of the basket and *raffia* or millet stem to cover and hold the basket shape (Figure 3-8). A woman will start with a group of papyrus stems dampened with water to keep them pliable and grouped together. Next, a basket maker will use *raffia* or millet stem, or both, simultaneously to loop and cover the papyrus and work in a coiled clockwise manner using a needle or a spear. This manner of creating a basket was also found to be the technique used by

the Harari basket weavers (Asante, 2005, 2009). To encourage a particular shape, a basket maker will push and encourage a basket coil to “round up” to create a bowl shape. When creating a pattern, basket makers count the loops to create a design. These types of baskets are considered to be the most complex because they are labor intensive and are intended to last for years (Novellino & Ertug, 2005).

### **Cultural Heritage**

Cultural heritage is the legacy of artifacts and intangible features of a group or society, past and present, and can be divided into two broad groups: tangible and intangible heritage. Tangible heritage includes archaeological sites, old infrastructure, cemeteries, rock paintings, old settlements and buildings while intangible heritage includes languages, folklore, music, songs, dances, handicrafts and other customs (Kamamba, 2003; Kurin, 2004). Cultural heritage can build individual, community and group identities (Kamamba, 2003) and can play a strong role in the economy of the area. Thus cultural resources can be used as a form of tourism in an area (Mbaiwa, 2004).

Basket making in Uganda is a form of intangible cultural heritage since the skill is passed down from mother to daughter most of the time. It is a skill shared by women with other women. Should basket weaving not be passed down from generation to generation, it is likely that this skill will lose its significance in the community and part of the Batoro and Bakiga cultural heritage will be lost. Researchers have argued that since the majority of weavers are over the age of 40 in many studied groups, weaving is a suitable means of income generation for older women, and that younger women and girls are not attracted to the profession. As a result, this form of intangible cultural heritage may be lost in certain societies simply because the art is not being transferred

from generation to generation (Asante, 2005; Kruger & Verster, 2001; Ljunggren, 2007; Makhado, 2004; Mbaiwa, 2004). Yet in this area around Kibale National Park, the picture is a little different.

Within the women's groups, 65% of women are between 18 and 40 years old while 22% are between the ages of 41 and 50 and only 11% are over the age of 51. This suggests, unlike other areas of Africa where the cultural heritage of basket weaving may be vulnerable, this area may be more likely to maintain the cultural heritage through tourism and the household. This wide range in the age groups may also suggest that Ugandans in this area are seeking other opportunities to supplement their primary income because subsistence farming may not bring in enough income even for those fit enough to farm.

When groups were asked if they thought tourism has made basket making more important, all the groups agreed that it did. Groups noted that they are "now known about to the outside," meaning the baskets are in demand because foreigners do not make them. Through selling the baskets to tourists, the women can make money to assist their families which seems to instill the importance of this part of their culture. Further, the groups felt that they are keeping certain traditions, such as practical use of the baskets, since they still sell to locals. The market for baskets can be year round though the high seasons are when tourists are in the area. Also, many groups have returned mostly or fully to using natural dye colors for the baskets as this is a prime interest of tourists.

Women were also asked how they felt tourism impacted their children. Overwhelmingly, they stated that their children wanted to go to school and learn. They

stressed that because of tourists, their children want to learn about other parts of the world. However, ten of the six women's groups noted that their daughters are still very interested in learning to make baskets because they see how their mothers and grandmothers can generate income from selling to tourists. Young women may be able to take care of a family in the future, potentially save money, and have money for school fees and other school materials. The same result was reflected by women interviewed by Pereira et al in South Africa as the mothers preferred their children to go to school but girls were still encouraged to learn basket weaving for extra income (2006). Again, this seemingly strong interest from younger women and girls suggest that basket making in this area is still perceived to be a positive means of generating income while also encouraging strong ties to cultural heritage.

In regards to tourism in the area, women were asked who they felt benefited more from tourism. Every group answered that women have the most to gain from tourism. Only one group mentioned that men will benefit more if they are employed directly to a protected area or lodge. Otherwise, through making handicrafts, women are the undeniable winners. Since handicrafts are considered women's work, women have an advantage to earn money from their skills. Very few men make crafts and are limited to few specialties. These handicrafts last longer than food and so they have a longer window of opportunity to make a sale. As one group summed up, they can make what the tourists want—baskets.

### **Changes in Basketry**

Though women's basket groups are relatively new to the area and to the tourism market, these women have become innovative in their pattern designs and shapes of baskets. The region of Uganda appears to be no different from other regions of Africa

attempting to adapt to tourism (Asante, 2005). As mentioned before, basket makers are incorporating multiple colors in patterns and taking cues from tourists' suggestions of attractive color combinations. They seem to be adapting their baskets to what styles and designs are selling best. This new addition of colors may also be a reflection on the contemporary cultural perspective of the basket makers, suggesting that this is can be considered a "succession of skills" rather than rejecting the way baskets were designed in the past (Novellino & Ertug, 2005).

In addition to adding multiple colors, women's groups have tried new shapes. Groups interviewed have noted that new shapes were created at the requests of tourists. New shapes include: oval bread baskets, serving trays, smaller millet baskets, and coaster sets. These shapes are utilitarian for most tourists and are easy to bring home. More decorative plates are also popular in that they are easily packable. These new shapes are now also used in the Ugandan home and in hotels and restaurants throughout the region.

As mentioned before, there seems to be a return to natural dye colors though artificial dye colors are still used for their vibrancy and attractive colors not easily replicated with organic material. Tourists increasingly prefer the organically dyed baskets though weavers throughout much of Africa are not willing to make the transition back to organically-produced color (Novellino & Ertug, 2005). Yet, basket weavers in Uganda have noted an interest by tourists for baskets made of natural colors and are seeking to meet demand. Still, it is important to note that basket weavers are trying other materials such as using strips of plastic potato sacks to create white and vibrant colors. Also, mostly seen on trivets and wall hangings, strips of shiny wrapping paper



and foil are being used as accents. These alternatives are less time-consuming as one buys them ready-made (Novellino & Ertug, 2005). Further, Asante (2005) suggests that the use of these synthetic materials is the result of recycling due to financial challenges that so many households experience, termed “need-based” recycling (Novellino & Ertug, 2005). Another change is spelling words on a basket such as Bible verses, short phrases, and words (Figure 3-9). These new styles demonstrate basket groups’ ability to be innovative with personal style and tourist and local tastes.

### **Resource Use**

Basket weavers around Kibale National Park have utilized several kinds of materials to create their craft. On occasion, depending on the amount of material or its location, certain materials may be preferred over another (Table 3-6). For the inside of the basket, overwhelmingly (93%), basket weavers prefer to use papyrus. Wetlands appear to be a major part of livelihood strategies for rural communities, yet they are often converted for other uses. If a group is near wetlands, it is easy to extract. The number of stems needed for a basket varies as the stems are split into smaller strips for flexibility and manipulation to shape the basket (Figure 3-10). An alternative to papyrus is banana stems stripped in similar fashion. According to the women’s groups, the banana fiber, while easily accessible when *musa* banana is on their land, it is not as flexible as papyrus or as easy to manipulate. The women also mention that the baskets feel different—they can distinguish between one made of papyrus and one made with *musa* banana. Yet, this may be an appropriate alternative should restrictions be placed on wetlands.

For the outer covering of a basket, several kinds of materials are used to decorate and provide structure to the basket. All groups interviewed use millet stem and *raffia* as

the materials looped around the papyrus or *musa* banana. Millet stem is seasonal and is hardy enough to give the basket its shape. It is used to decorate the outside of the basket and is used in its natural color or may be dyed. Because it is not as flexible, millet stem can only be used to loop around single rows of papyrus. *Raffia* is more flexible and easily dyed and manipulated as the outer covering. It seems to be used year round but is not indigenous to the area. *Raffia* is either looped around single rows of papyrus or looped around several rows to create vertical shapes in design.

Other materials used to decorate the outside of a basket are banana fibers (*musa*), plastic, and *emberiya*. Banana fibers are typically used in their natural color as they are various shades of brown. They are used much like *raffia* and instead of being woven around single rows of papyrus, they are used to cover several rows in a vertical design. Plastic is used just like millet stem or *raffia* as they are woven around single rows of papyrus. The plastic comes from the large potato sacks. The bags are easily stripped as the sacks are woven in a checkered fashion. Then the strips are cleaned and dyed a desired color. *Emberiya* is a weed that is found around homes and used in the same way as millet stem.

The women in the groups interviewed obtain their materials in various places (Table 3-7). When asked where they find their materials, groups mentioned that besides in the markets, they find their materials in their gardens, wetlands, on banana plantations and in the forest patches outside and in the park. It is difficult to determine how much is bought and how much is collected. Women collect millet stem from their gardens. However, if there is a poor crop season, then she may ask her neighbor if she may collect. Women have mentioned that with this, their neighbor may offer the millet

stem for free or will allow her the material in return for labor or a fee. If collecting from a neighbor isn't an option, as millet is seasonal, a woman may then have to buy the millet stem in the market. Millet stem is sold in a bundle for about 1,000USH and can make at least one basket.

Papyrus is collected from nearby swamps. Women may travel anywhere from a few hundred meters up to 5km in search of papyrus. When asked to describe the selection process, women explained that they only pick the "old ones" for the inside of the basket. Young papyrus stems are only chosen when used to hold papyrus stems together as if it were millet or *raffia*. Women mentioned that when collecting, they collect as much as they can find so they do not have to regularly search for the stems. Most of the time, collecting in the swamps is free, but if a swamp is on someone's land, women will have to ask for permission and oftentimes pay a small fee for the collection. Members of the groups that deal with this note that owners of the land know that the women need the papyrus for making baskets and are making a profit from the baskets. Owners of the swamp want to profit as well. A bundle of papyrus can cost about 3,000-4,000USH.

Many families have a small "plantation" of bananas, *matooke*, which is a main staple for households. The stem of the banana leaf is stripped and used just like papyrus but is less flexible. Further, the leaves of the banana can be used as decoration for the outside of the basket. Since the women interviewed had banana plants on their own land, no one needed to buy the materials from others. This gives them access to important materials for free, though it may be perceived as a less desirable material to use.

Women search through the forests for certain plant dyes. Depending on their proximity, two groups have from time to time requested permission to collect within Kibale National Park. The process takes about two weeks before receiving approval and they are required to be escorted with a guard to prevent the collection of other materials not requested. The two groups who apply for permission have little complaint other than the length of time for approval. The other groups collect materials in forests patches outside the park. In search for materials found in forests, women may search up to 5-8km depending on the plant material needed.

Everything can be bought in the market. Though much material can be collected around or near the home, some groups and individuals prefer to buy materials in the market. *Raffia* can only be bought in markets because it comes from Jinja. Some groups will pool their money collectively and send a member to a local market or as far as Kampala to buy. In addition, artificial dyes are purchased in Fort Portal and in Kampala. Though prices for these materials are increasing, women still prefer to use these materials as they feel they add to the beauty of the baskets and claim that the tourists are attracted to them. When asked why they travel as far as Kampala for some materials, the groups who send a representative stated that materials are much cheaper there and the cost of travel is less expensive than buying from the markets in the area. This does not happen on a regular basis but rather they travel two or three times a year.

Eight of the sixteen groups interviewed felt the resources they used are decreasing. When asked if the groups engaged in any resource conservation, fourteen of the groups said that they did. It is important to mention that all groups consider the conservation of resources as conserving wetlands over other materials found

elsewhere. Eleven of these fourteen groups referred to their resource conservation as picking older stems of papyrus and taking however much they can find and are capable of collecting. One group mentioned that they contribute money to swamp conservation in their area. Another group plants some materials around their homes and teaches others to choose older stems of papyrus. Another group mentioned that they only use banana stems and felt their contribution to conservation was not using papyrus stems at all. Of the groups that felt their resources were decreasing, they stated the cause was the conversion of wetlands to farmland. Other research has also found this to be a threat to basket making and other handicrafts (Baker, 2008; Kgathi et al., 2005; Sola, 2004). In addition, several of the groups noted that the prices of materials were becoming more expensive. Kgathi et al discuss the increase of prices for resources may be an indicator of natural resource scarcity (2005), which may suggest that the groups' perception of decreasing resources is indeed occurring.

Table 3-1. Reasons for participating in weaving group where groups could provide more than one reason n=16

Reason	n	per cent
Earn Money	16	100.00%
School Fees/Supplies	10	62.50%
HH Needs	9	56.25%
Livestock	2	12.50%
Medical Needs	2	12.50%
Savings/Credit	1	6.25%
Social/Learning	1	6.25%

Table 3-2. Reported ages of women in groups

Age	n	%
18-20	29	10%
21-30	82	28%
31-40	78	27%
41-50	65	22%
51-60	22	8%
61+	15	5%
Total	291	100%

Table 3-3. Reported occupation of group members by marital status. n=291

Occupation	Never Married		Married		Widowed		Divorced		Total	Percent
	Married	%	Married	%	Widowed	%	Divorced	%		
Handicraft	10	3%	13	4%	4	1%	3	1%	30	10%
Handicraft/Farming	14	5%	112	38%	40	14%	19	7%	185	64%
Handicraft/Other	6	2%	4	1%	1	0%	4	1%	15	5%
Farming	2	1%	24	8%	13	4%	2	1%	41	14%
Farming/Other	1	0%	5	2%	1	0%	0	0%	7	2%
Other Profession	5	2%	6	2%	2	1%	0	0%	13	4%
Total Individuals	38	13%	164	56%	61	21%	28	10%	291	100%

Table 3-4. Reported decade of arrival in age category n=291

Decade of arrival	18-40 yrs		41yrs +	
		%		%
born	117	62%	31	30%
1950s	0	0%	2	2%
1960s	0	0%	11	11%
1970s	2	1%	24	24%
1980s	20	11%	16	16%
1990s	27	14%	12	12%
2000s	23	12%	6	6%
Total	189	100%	102	100%

Table 3-5. Reported challenges of participating in weaving; Groups could express more than one reason. n=16

Reason	n	per cent
Limited Market	11	68.75%
Lack of Materials	10	62.50%
Poking Fingers/Cutting Self	7	43.75%
Chest Pain	5	31.25%
Competition w/ Groups	2	12.50%
Basket Shelf Life	2	12.50%
Materials Expensive	1	6.25%
Millet is Seasonal	1	6.25%



Table 3-6. Reported materials group uses to make baskets. Number reflects number of groups using material (n=16)

Material	n	per cent
raffia	16	100%
millet stem	16	100%
papyrus	15	94%
banana fiber	12	75%
<i>Emuyro</i> (local plant name)	6	38%
sisal	2	13%
plastic	2	13%
<i>Emberiya</i> (local plant name)	1	6%

Table 3-7. Reported areas where groups find their weaving materials. N reflects number of groups. (n=16)

Location	n	per cent
Buy in Market	16	100%
Gardens (personal/neighbors)	15	94%
Swamps	15	94%
Banana plantations (personal/neighbors)	10	63%
Forests	6	38%

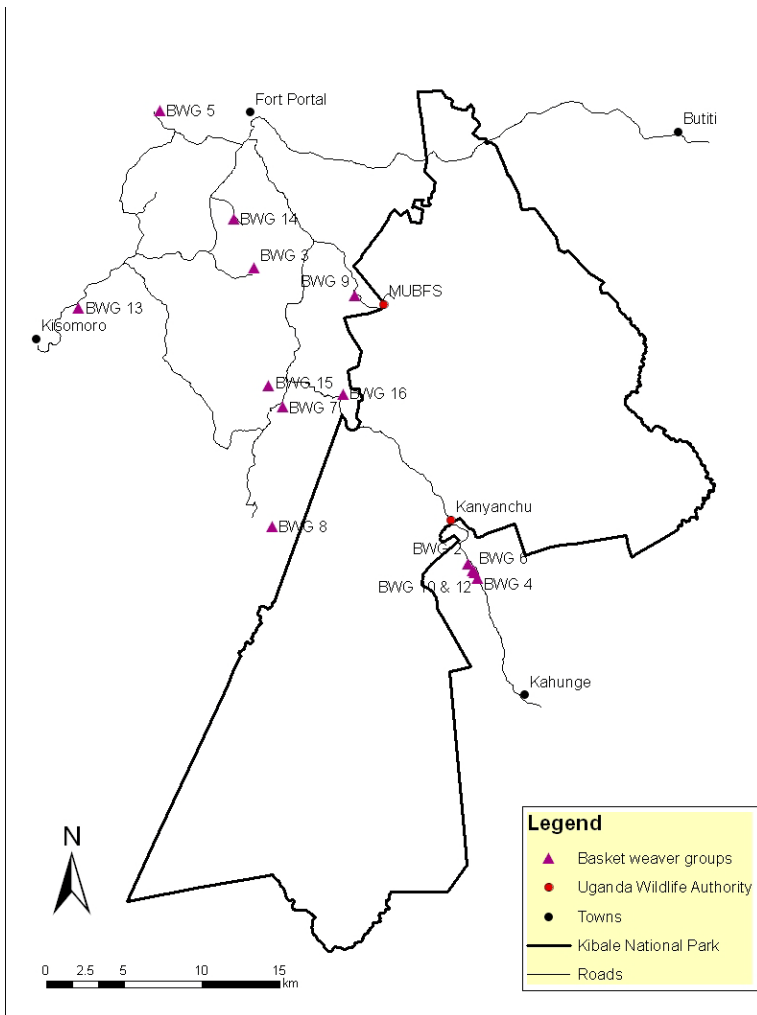


Figure 3-1. Locations of basket weaver groups



Figure 3-2. Weavers group on east side of park



Figure 3-3. Basket weaver group on West side of KNP



Figure 3-4. Natural plant materials Bixa and pigsbooze



Figure 3-5. Traditional baskets used in the household: plate, small coffee bean, large millet, and large millet cleaning basket.



Figure 3-6. Traditional designs with 2 or more colors



Figure 3-7. Baskets displaying various use of materials: raffia, plastic, and millet stem



Figure 3-8. Millet stem; weaver using spear to loop; raffia; coils of millet stem



Figure 3-9. New baskets styles: a. with words; b. oval shaped bread basket; c. coaster box



Figure 3-10. Craft maker harvesting papyrus for future baskets

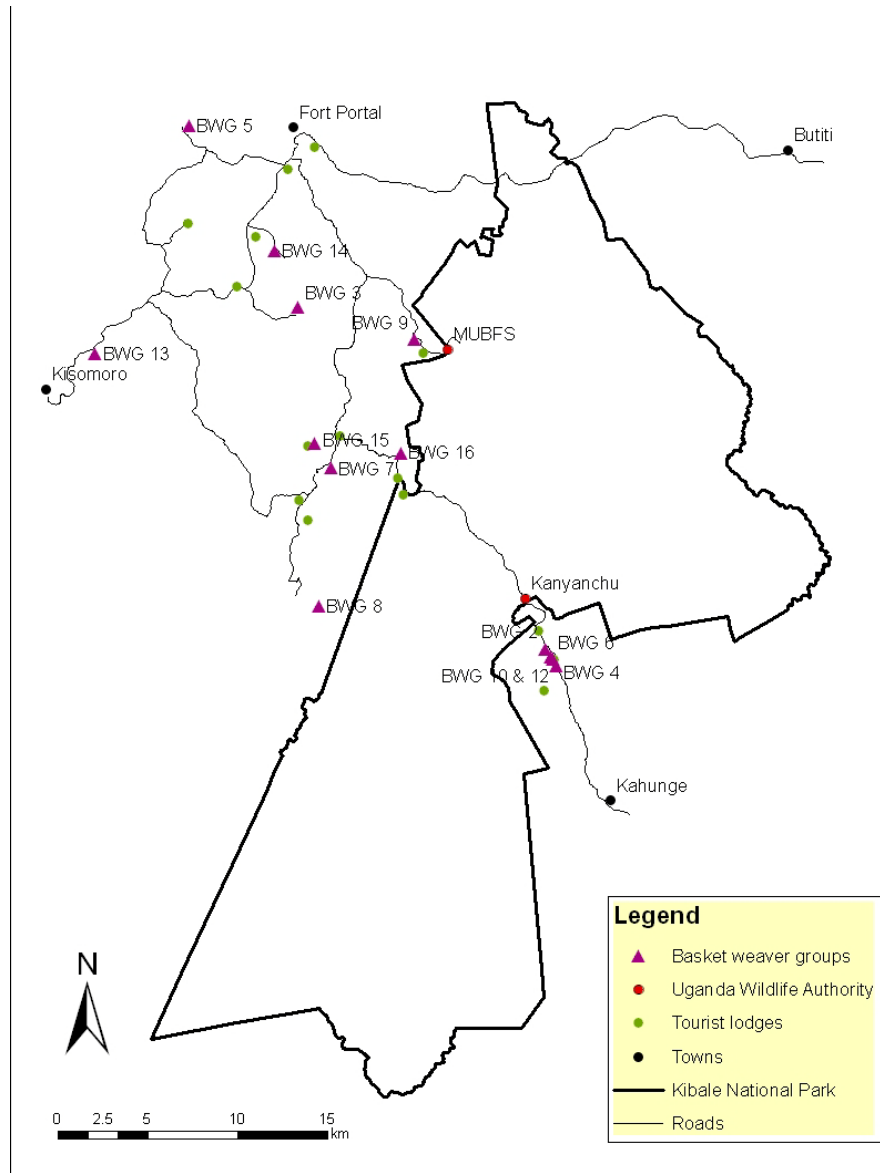


Figure 3-11. Location of weaver groups and lodges.

## CHAPTER 4 EMERGING THEMES AND ISSUES

Sorting through the interviews, five emerging themes and issues arose. These emerging themes lead to more questions for further research in this area and within these groups.

### **Great Expectations**

All of the groups had high hopes for success no matter how developed or underdeveloped their group appears to be. Even the group of two, which lives around other larger competing groups, has strong hopes for success in recruiting new members and the hope that tourism will indeed succeed around KNP.

There are varying levels of expectations of tourism and the success of basket weaving. Some groups feel their craft is of a caliber to warrant higher prices. This feeling appears to stem from long term interaction with tourists, easy access to display their crafts and their affiliation with UCOTA. Though quality is subjective, it seems arguable that other groups may have better craftsmanship or basket style and design if one were to judge based on the criteria these groups say make a quality basket. Yet, areas with perhaps better quality in craft may not have the tourism traffic to warrant increased prices. Still, all groups have hopes that tourism will continue to grow in the area and that they will reap some benefits through basket weaving. Little thought has been devoted to the impacts, and their responses, should tourism fail to meet their expectations.

### **Multi-purpose Groups**

The concept of a multi-purpose craft group may be advantageous. Many of the groups indicated that aside from making baskets, there are driving motivations such as

caring for orphans and widows, supporting HIV/AIDS individuals, or conservation. Groups that advertise their motives for engaging in basket making may entice more tourists to buy from their group. If groups can demonstrate that at least some of the money will be dedicated to a cause in the community, there may be a stronger incentive from the tourist to buy and perhaps purchase more items than intended.

### **Competition**

Some groups are recognizing that as more and more women's groups form to sell baskets, the competition increases. Some groups worry about saturation of the market which may force them to undercut their prices in order to make some profit. Areas like Bigodi and around Fort Portal appear to be quite vulnerable to saturation.

Yet, competition drives innovation which may encourage groups to explore their creativity even further. New shapes, patterns, and color combinations may not only be great for business but also may prevent groups from becoming bored or stagnant.

### **Marketability**

The groups around Kibale National Park have great motivations and are strong in their craft. However, they lack access to other markets and the skills to be savvy businesses. Groups need assistance from local governments, NGOs, and other groups that may provide adequate business training. In addition, UCOTA could potentially seek out new member groups, giving more women the opportunity to sell their craft on a global market. Lodge owners should also take advantage of partnering with a women's group nearby to sell to their guests. Every group interviewed had at least one lodge within 3 kilometers that could be a potential business partner (Figure 3-11). This partnership has potential mutual benefits, particularly in high tourist seasons. Contracts with shops in high-trafficked areas should also be considered. Contracts with certain



groups could potentially ease the issues women have with their current relationship with shop owners. Finally, diversifying the craft and being able to market it could keep basket weaving groups relevant to tourism in the area.

### **Distance from Park and the Urban Center**

From these interviews, groups closer to the park appear to be doing better, or are more successful, than groups farther away from the park. Kanyanchu houses researchers consistently, and Bigodi is able to attract tourists coming to view primates. Also, the groups that are closer to Fort Portal have the potential to sell their products in shops and take advantage of the tourism traffic coming through the town.

The further away from the park and more specifically, any of the park entrances, groups do not appear to be as successful. In addition, the groups struggle to enter larger markets for buying needed materials. As stated earlier, all interviewed groups had a lodge within 3km. Without any sort of partnership with lodges nearby that are receiving tourists, there is little opportunity to sell their baskets.

Another logistical issue that arises the farther away from the park a group is located is accessibility. Uganda has two rainy seasons and with the majority of roads unpaved, some roads can degrade badly or simply be impassable. Tourists cannot arrive to their area and the groups can't get out to larger markets.

Despite these emerging issues, Ugandans and foreign entrepreneurs are investing in the southwest region of Uganda. There are high hopes to revitalize Uganda's tourism comparable to its prime in the 1960s. The entrepreneurs in this area seem to be more innovative because of the potentially high competition with other well established tourism in neighboring countries.

## CHAPTER 5 CONCLUSION

Handicraft production represents one of the few areas where it may be possible for women in rural areas to enter an international market and benefit directly from international tourism (Ljunggren, 2007). These small craft industries are often viewed as being able to increase the incomes of marginalized people as they combine locally available natural resources with traditional skills, labor, investment and creativity available to produce a product that can potentially be sold for, at best, a locally significant price (Bishop & Scoones, 1994). Women around Kibale National Park are seeking alternatives to agriculture for income and many are doing so through forming weaving groups. Research on basket weavers in this area of western Uganda has not previously been conducted. This study helps provide initial insight into these women's basket weaving groups, and has helped identify emerging themes for further research.

Through this study, the group histories have revealed the increasing popularity of groups that engage in the informal sector of tourism. Some groups are more established, having been around for the past 10-15 years, while others have recently started. All wish to improve their incomes and the majority of women say they use this supplemental income on school fees and materials and household needs. Others, when possible, will allocate their profits in a local savings and credit scheme to save for illness or other emergencies.

There seem to be increasing pressures on the women interviewed. Many of the groups have agendas or missions to assist the community and their families. Several groups mention the need to care for orphans from family members who have died of AIDS. The purpose is to provide better opportunities for youth either by caring for them,

contributing money to a school block, or saving money to allow their children, particularly girls, to go to school. In addition, the members of these groups are younger than found in other groups studied in Africa. While this may be an advantage for maintaining cultural heritage in this region, it also suggests that employment opportunities are few and that subsistence farming may not earn enough to provide for the household. Finally, while just over half of the members are married, the remainder are widowed, divorced or have never been married. The need to find additional ways to make income becomes even more important particularly in cases such as these when a woman becomes too old to farm or has to provide for more members of a household.

I found that groups have some type of organization with elected officers, constitutions, membership fees and set meetings. Only four groups engage in international export of their products on a sporadic basis, and this isn't without its problems. Often, the group's quota cannot be met within the timeframe given and the baskets are sold for less than what they would sell in their local shop. Standards are required in order to be accepted which is also a challenge for these groups. There are also issues with cancellations that may occur while the order is being processed.

Groups seem to have a lot of trust in their money handlers, even with little or no training. Women have a lot of trust in each other and apparently this seems to hold them accountable. Women note that the challenges are when baskets sell for less or when shop keepers insist on increasing the asking price to also make a profit. In addition to this trust, these groups often make decisions about loans to members. There is an understanding that everyone is struggling and the group as a whole makes

the decision to give money to an asking member. Often, there is no set timeframe to return the money but there is trust that she will eventually return it.

Groups were asked to share their challenges and successes as a group. For the challenges, market demand is a problem. Groups have loose relationships, if any, with lodge owners, tourist sites, or shop owners. They have limited opportunities to sell their baskets when the connections are not solidified. In addition, more and more groups are being formed which increases the competition among the groups. Groups may find it challenging to sell at a reasonable price if other groups are selling for less. Without any security such as having a contract with a lodge or tourist site, more challenges may arise because of saturation. Further, materials will be in more demand. Since most women consider the availability of papyrus as a raw material is decreasing, the more groups formulated will increase the pressure on this material. Wetlands in this area are already under pressure due to the increasing population and the need for farmland. Groups may have to search farther for materials, increasing the labor costs, or the prices for harvesting these materials may also increase as the scarcity increases.

Currently, the economic benefits from basket weaving are attractive for groups. They feel that they can look after their families better. They have the money to provide for household materials and allow their children to go to school. Further, some groups have been successful enough to be able to make a decision on purchasing other items such as a sewing machine. Finally, groups have the opportunity to share ideas with each other and assist each other on improving their skills in weaving. This cohesion is considered a component of success for several of the groups.

Basket making is extremely laborious and includes the gathering of materials – collecting or buying—and creating the basket. Members can travel long distances to find materials and invest significant time in collection. Making the basket takes anywhere from one day to several weeks and members will weave anywhere from 30 minutes a day to several hours. During this time, occupational hazards such as poking one's finger or chest pain are likely to occur. Another added labor cost is making the dyes for baskets. Since more tourists seem to be attracted to the natural-colored baskets, more groups are returning to the organic dye process. Artificial dyes are easier to make and can be bought in the market. Natural dyes can take anywhere from one hour to two days to make. This added time may mean that more baskets are bought by tourists but it seems to also add significant time to creating the basket.

That being said, tourists seem to have influences on other areas of basket weaving aside from color choices. Tourists seem to influence the types of baskets that are being created. Traditional baskets are smaller now and more of the 'easily packable' baskets are being created. In addition, new types of baskets are being created such as the oval basket or flower pot basket. The ability to meet the requests and ideas from tourists may allow groups to be more innovative and creative in their craft.

Consequently, the demand for baskets and the range of ages within these groups may contribute to maintaining cultural heritage. Since the skill is passed mostly from mother to daughter, it is a form of intangible heritage that other places are losing because younger women are not engaging in basket weaving. Younger girls around KNP are being encouraged to maintain the skill so that they can contribute to their

household in the future. Young girls are also witnessing their female relatives benefiting from basket weaving which encourages them to participate. The women in these groups feel that they have the most to gain from tourism as they can earn money for a skill they have been practicing since they were children. These products can last longer than perishable items and there is tourist demand.

More research regarding tourism and basket weaving should be conducted in this area around KNP. Particularly, more in depth research could be done regarding decision-making for women to join weaving groups using appropriate social theoretical frameworks. Collective action and group identity could also be investigated with weaving groups. An in depth investigation of labor, specifically with geographic location of resources, could bring better insight to time investment with this part time activity. Tourist buying behavior is another potential area for exploration, particularly to determine if there is a correlation between what weavers perceive to be marketable and what tourists actually purchase. Finally, measuring attitudes of these women's groups through the years about tourism would be useful to determine if tourism and KNP are perceived as benefits to women in the surrounding area.

This initial study is meant to learn about women's weaver groups and their responses to tourism. This research covered group histories, the economic features of weaving, resource use, and cultural heritage tourism around Kibale National Park. It also suggests more research topics to be explored about tourism through these kinds of informal business groups. Tourism is continuing to expand in Uganda. Understanding how communities are responding to parks as agents of change through these relatively

early stages of tourism may allow for better development responses from NGOs and governments in the future.

APPENDIX A  
INFORMATION ABOUT WEAVER GROUPS

Group No.	Age Distribution of Basket Weaving Groups												Total
	18-20	%	21-30	%	31-40	%	41-50	%	51-60	%	61+	%	
1	2	5	8	19	13	31	11	26	2	5	6	14	42
2	0		2	100	0		0		0		0		2
3	7	22	7	22	6	19	9	28	3	9	0		32
4	0		4	17	5	22	8	35	4	17	2	9	23
5	0		0		3	60	1	20	1	20	0		5
6	4	57	3	43	0		0		0		0		7
7	1	33	1	33	1	33	0		0		0		3
8	0		1	5	2	10	6	30	6	30	5	25	20
9	2	7	16	55	6	21	3	10	2	7	0		29
10	0		10	43	7	30	6	26	0		0		23
11	6	23	7	27	7	27	5	19	1	4	0		26
12	0		3	18	7	41	7	41	0		0		17
13	4	17	14	58	3	13	3	13	0		0		24
14	3	17	4	22	7	39	2	11	2	11	0		18
15	0		1	13	5	63	1	13	0		1	13	8
16	0		1	8	6	50	3	25	1	8	1	8	12
Total	29		82		78		65		22		15		291

Groups	Education Levels of Individuals in Groups			
	None	Primary	Secondary	College +
1	10	18	13	1
2	0	1	1	0
3	9	20	3	0
4	10	10	3	0
5	0	5	0	0
6	0	0	7	0
7	0	3	0	0
8	14	6	0	0
9	4	22	2	1
10	6	15	2	0
11	5	17	4	0
12	2	11	4	0
13	2	21	1	0
14	1	13	4	0
15	0	4	4	0
16	3	8	1	0
Total	66	174	49	2



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Ethnicity of group members

Group No.	Mtooro	Mkiga	Other
1	41	0	1
2	1	1	0
3	27	5	0
4	2	20	1
5	5	0	0
6	2	2	3
7	3	0	0
8	3	17	0
9	27	2	0
10	12	9	2
11	14	11	1
12	1	16	0
13	23	0	1
14	18	0	0
15	8	0	0
16	11	0	1
Total	198	83	10

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APPENDIX B  
BASKET WEAVING PLANTS, MATERIALS, AND LABOR

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**Plant Material and Colors Created**

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mufoka	green
mufoka + ash	black/gray
mufoka + curry leaves	bright green
Bixa	orange/yellow
Bixa + mufoka	brown
pigsbooze + ash	yellow
pigsbooze	brown/orange
Rubia	maroon
omusororo	green
tamaric	yellow
dodo	green
emuyro	green

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**Basket and Length of Time to Create**

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Small Coffee Bean	1-5 days
Small bowls	2 days
Trivet	3 days
Plate	3 days - 1 week
Coaster Set + basket	almost 1 week
Oval Basket	almost 1 week
Tray	4 days - 2 weeks
Large basket w/ wider spacing	4 days
Med. Millet Basket	1-2 weeks
Large Coffee Bean	1 1/2 weeks
Flower pot basket	3 weeks
Large Millet Basket	2 weeks - 1 month
Large basket	1 month

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## BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

From 1997-2000, Amy Panikowski spent three and a half years at Mars Hill College pursuing a B.S. in Biology. During the summer of 1999, she studied wildlife management in Kenya through the School for Field Studies program hosted by Boston University. Soon after graduating in 2000, she left to fulfill her obligation to the U.S. Peace Corps in Nchenachena, Malawi. There, she worked as a parks and wildlife extension officer under the community-based natural resource management program. After returning, she worked for three years in the public school system teaching honors biology and worked as a zoo educator for Busch Gardens. In 2005, Amy applied and was accepted to the University of Florida in the Anthropology department. Realizing she could not focus on her interests, she reapplied to the department of Geography in 2007. She has been funded by her graduate assistantship as UF's Peace Corps Recruiter since 2005. Her academic emphasis has been on human and environmental interactions, particularly around protected areas and with women. Amy will continue to pursue her PhD in geography and hopes to continue research in Uganda on women and basket weaving. She expects to also earn her certificates in African Studies and Tropical Conservation and Development. Her master's was completed in December 2009.