ENVIRONMENTAL ABUSE IN UGANDA

Is it Lack of Institutional Capacity or Political Will?

A Publication of the National Association of Professional Environmentalist (NAPE) with Support from Open Society Initiative for East Africa (OSIEA)

2008

Residential and Industrial Buildings in Wetlands: *Is government nowadays selling plots in wetlands?*

Background

Environment consists of the air, water, land, fauna and flora and all the other things that mankind interacts with. Absence or destruction of any of these components can cause disruption, deprivation, disorientation and dysfunction of the environment. All the other components, with the exception of humankind, seem to constantly exist in harmony with the environment. It is the intentional or unintentional disruption, deprivation, disorientation, over-exploitation or destruction of one or more of these components in the environment by mankind that are referred to as environmental abuse. It is because of mankind's propensity to abuse the environment and its components that policies, laws and institutional frameworks are often put in place.

Environmental governance refers to how governments, institutions, the private sector and the general public control their actions regarding natural resources management. It is the primary means of maintaining oversight and accountability regarding natural resources management. Therefore, good governance of the environment ensures oversight, implementation, enforcement, monitoring and evaluation of the policy, legal and institutional provisions governing natural resources management in a fair, just and democratic manner.

Government of Uganda (GoU) has put in place many policies, legal and institutional frameworks for environmental management that are applauded as being among the best on the African continent. The policy and legal provisions include the 1995 Constitution, Environment Management Statutes 2000, Uganda Wildlife Statute 2000, National Forestry and Tree Planting Act 2003, Water Act 2003, among others. The institutional provisions include National Environment Management Authority (NEMA), National Forestry Authority (NFA), Uganda Wildlife Authority (UWA), Uganda Revenue Authority (URA), Ministry of Water and Environment, etc. Despite the policy, legal and institutional provisions, environmental degradation and abuse continues to rein in the country.

A survey was conducted by NAPE to document major cases of environmental abuse in central and western Uganda. The survey also reviewed the policy, legal and institutional frameworks governing natural resources management in the country with a view of identifying the linkages/gaps and understanding why such abuse persists. It covered governance of wetlands, forests, water bodies, waste handling and disposal.

The survey established that there is widespread environmental abuse in Uganda. NEMA, which is mandated to govern the environment in Uganda, has remained thin on the ground with limited capacity for enforcing the law. Similarly, UWA, URA and NFA, which, like NEMA, have law enforcement structures, have remained ineffective. NEMA's enforcement structure is dependent on the National Police, while NFA and UWA have their independent policing units, thus making NEMA less effective than UWA or NFA. Therefore, *is environmental abuse and degradation in the country a lack of institutional capacity (human & financial) or is it a lack of political will?* It is important to note here that technocrats claim that the failure of government institutions to effectively implement and enforce the policy and legal provisions is due to political interference that stifles proper governance of natural resources. Some politicians, on the other hand, claim that the institutions are simply weak and have no capacity to implement and enforce the law. *So, who is telling the truth?*

The justification that is usually given by some politicians for the continued and unabated degradation of the environment is that there is need to fight against the rampant poverty in the country, create jobs, and providing housing, commercial and industrial space, which can only be achieved through the utilisation of the existing natural resources. Therefore, there is little that can be done to avoid environmental degradation. While this seems justifiable, these aspirations have overshadowed the need for conservation and sustainable utilisation of natural resources, thus promoting abuse of the environment.

This booklet highlights the cases of environmental abuse in Uganda and attempts to identify the causes of governance failures and makes recommendations on how the cases of abuse could be remedied.

Case One: Mining in National Parks

Mining is one of the activities that support the economy of Uganda. The history of Uganda's mining is dominated by copper, cobalt, Gold, Gypsum, phosphates, sand, limestone, tin, wolfram, among others, albeit at relatively small-scales compared to other countries where these minerals are extracted on large-scales. In the 1950s (during Colonial times), there was no law prohibiting mining in national parks, but with the enactment of the UWA Act 2000, mining activities in national parks become illegal. For example, limestone was mined at small-scale at Dura in Queen Elizabeth National Park (QENP) since the 1950s. The Dura site remained active operated by private companies until 1987 when the National Enterprise Corporation (NEC), a private sector arm of the Ministry of Defence, took-over limestone mining at the site. On dissolution in 1997, NEC opted to sell it rights to Dura to Hima Cement Limited, a Lafarge own company, which rekindled limestone mining activities at the site. But the enactment and promulgation of the UWA Act 2000 complicated the Hima's progress. Currently, Lafarge-Hima Cement Ltd is battling a case in the High Court brought against it by the National Association of Professional Environmentalists (NAPE) that is seeking Court Injunction against the companies activities in Dura-QENP. Dura is an important wildlife corridor between Kibaale National Park

Photo 1(a)

Photo 1(a): Blue-green copper oxides oozing out of Kilembe mines in a stream entering River Nyamwamba, Kasese district

Photo 1(b)

Photo 1(b): River Nyamwamba that flows into the Lake George Ramsar site, Kasese District

Source: NAPE File Photo

and QENP that connects to other critical wildlife areas in Uganda, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Rwanda, Tanzania and Burundi.

In addition, recent discoveries of commercial fossil oil reserves in the Albertine Graben in western Uganda has made mining in parks more controversial, because the area is interspaced with major National Parks such as Murchison Falls, Kibaale, Queen Elizabeth, Semuliki, Bwindi Impenetrable; Game Reserves like Kabwoya, and Forest Reserves like Bujawa, Muhangi and Bugoma that are important biodiversity areas. These areas are also crisscrossed by internationally significant wetlands, lakes, rivers, and swamps that are refugium of many flora and fauna species. Such mining activities are likely to negatively affect the ecosystem functionality, animal behaviour and the sanctity of biodiversity/wildlife in the area, and thus violate the policy and legal provisions on environment. *Is such violation of policy, legal and institutional provisions a lack of institutional capacity and political will or shere neglect, carelessness and irresponsibility on the part of individuals, institutions and government mandated to conserve, preserve and protect these critical habitats*?

Mining usually produces large quantities of waste rock, chemical tailings and dust releases, which find their way into the soil, underground watercourses, rivers, lakes and forest areas that may disrupt normal functioning of these ecosystems. Examples in Uganda are:-

- The abandoned Kilembe Copper mines in Kasese District, which have for a long time been oozing copper oxides into River Nyamwamba that flows into the Lake George Ramsar site (*Photo 1a&b*)
- Kasese Cobalt Mines that until recently have discharged tailings of Cobalt for many years into the Lake George basin
- Hima Cement factory in Kasese continues to discharge large amounts of cement dust into the environment, despite the claim for having installed cement dust containment plumes.

Although it is usually expected that communities within the vicinity of mining developments would directly benefit in terms of livelihoods, unfortunately, this is not the case in Uganda. Most of the people in proximity of such developments live in abject poverty and at high health risks from the effluents. This has attracted a lot of criticism from the local communities, while little or no action to remedy the situation is taken by the authorities concerned.

Case Two: Destruction of Natural Forests on Bugala Islands in Lake Victoria

Uganda's forest cover was about 44% (106,058km^2) the total land area (241,040km^2) during Colonial times. Since then, this forest estate has continued to shrink and now stands at only 18.4% (43,387km^2) of the country's land area. Over the last 18 years, the country has lost its natural forest estate at a rate of 86,500hectares per year (FAO, 2005; FAO 2007)[1]. This has mainly been due to human encroachment on forests for land for agriculture, fuel-wood/charcoal, timber, housing, commercial and industrial developments as the population increases. This forest loss has also been aggravated by the poor development plans that emphasize extensive instead of intensive developments i.e. housing infrastructure takes predominately horizontal instead of vertical dimensions, while farming is essentially extensive and not intensive. Similar trends are still prevalent today and are threatening the remaining natural forest estate in the

1. FAO, Global Forest Resources Assessment, 2005 & 2007. www.fao.org/forestry/

country. The current population stands at 30.2million people and is growing at a rate of 3.5% per year (CIA, 2007)[2].

A case in point is the BIDCO Palm Oil tree estate on Bugala islands in Lake Victoria that has decimated over 10,000hectares of natural forest estate (*Photo 2*). This Palm Oil estate was encouraged and assisted by government to proceed against public protest and all tenable professional advice. The Palm oil estate is intended to produce cooking oil, soaps and bio-diesel. It is also intended to provide employment, a source of tax revenue, mitigate the import costs for cooking oil, soaps and fossil fuels, among other services.

Source: NAPE File Photo

Photo 2: BIDCO Palm Oil Estate that replaced a protected natural Forest on Bugala Island, Kalangala District also violates the 200m buffer zone from Lake Victoria (inset)

While this is well intentioned and good for the development of the country, the location of the estate was not based on best social, economic and environmental practices in the appraisal of the project. The Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) for the project submitted to government for appraisal was inadequate in many aspects (especially social, economic and environmental), but because it was a politically supported project, it was approved.

This Palm oil plantation has eroded the natural forest estate at Bugala up to the fringes of Lake Victoria in total violation of the 200m buffer zone from the water level as stipulated in the environmental statutes. This has worsened the siltation problem of the Lake, thereby affecting the quality of water The herbicides, pesticides and fertilizers used at the Palm oil plantation end–up in the Lake, which obviously affects the quality of water in the lake (Orgaram, 2008)

2. CIA. The World Factbook. Central Intelligence Agency (2007).
3. Orgaram (2008). Policy, institutional provisions governing hazardous chemical products in Uganda. NAPE Report 2008. 80p.

and fisheries. This kind of lake pollution has become evident with the recent algae blooms that have been observed in the lake (*Photo 7*).

The country has in the recent past (1986-2007) registered forest degradation that is perpetrated by the very party (i.e. government) supposed to prevent it (NAPE, 2007)[3]. In addition, natural forests are continuously being replaced with planted forest estates dominated by exotic (alien) species, thus altering the local ecosystem set-up and micro-and macro-climates.

Case Three: Poor Waste Management around Lake Victoria in Uganda

Good management of wastes contributes to reduced health risks, eliminates habitat for vermin and protects the environment. Wastes pose one of the major environmental challenges in many urban centres around Lake Victoria such as Ggaba, Luzira, Kitezi, Nakivubo Channel in Kampala and Kitubulu in Entebbe. This is particularly true for commercial, domestic, industrial and medical wastes. This was a problem when government was responsible for the collection and disposal of wastes and is still the problem after the privatisation of waste handling and disposal activities. It was hoped that by privatising waste handling and disposal in urban centres, the waste problem would be eliminated completely, but this has proved to be exceedingly difficult.

Today, many privately owned buildings and factories/industries lack proper waste management and disposal facilities. Most of them discharge their effluents directly into the environment. It is not uncommon to find sewers discharging directly in water drainage channels on the roads or finding garbage littered in the streets and outside domestic, institutional, commercial and

Source: NAPE

Photo 3: KCC Garbage Trucks carrying municipal wastes to Landfills in the vicinity of Kampala city. Notice the overflowing garbage that often litters the streets as they move.

industrial buildings in urban centres in the proximity of the Lake. Kampala City Council (KCC) garbage collection trucks have been seen littering garbage on the streets as they ferry it to the landfills (*Photo 3*). This waste often finds its way into the Lake via rainfall floods that are prevalent

4. NAPE (2007): Challenges and opportunities for community ecological governance. NAPE Publication. 62p

in the Lake Victoria basin. In addition, there are many horticulture farms along the shores of Lake Victoria (*Photo 6*) that have been reported to discharge their waste-water directly into the Lake. It is not clear where medical wastes are discharged. It is alleged that medical waste finds its way into mainstream domestic and commercial waste disposal pathways.

The urban population lacks the culture of waste separation and sorting at source, which makes waste handling and disposal a nightmare. This is worsened by the lack of capacity (human, financial & technological) and inadequate policy, legal and institutional framework for the management of wastes in the country. The following are examples of poor waste management practices common in the country.

a). Medical Waste Management in Kampala

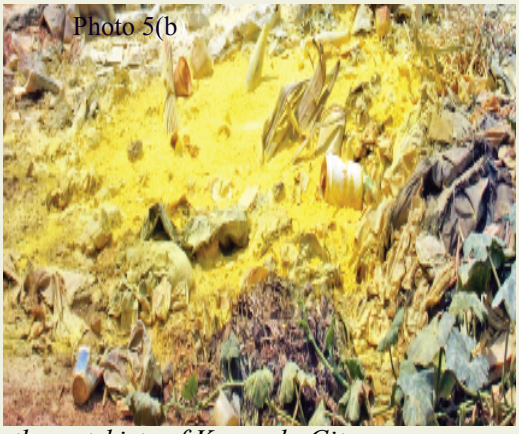
An interview with an official at Mulago Hospital revealed that after incineration of the waste (*Photo 4a&b*), the ash is mixed with the municipal waste and transported by private companies that depose it at gazetted landfills such as Kitezi. It was observed that not all the medical waste is incinerated and some of it finds its way into mainstream disposal facilities.

Source: NAPE File Photo

Photo 4(a&b): Medical wastes at Mulago Hospital being incinerated in Kampala: *Notice its poor state*

b). Solid Waste Management in the Vicinity of Kampala City

Kitezi Landfill is one of the gazetted waste disposal sites close to Kampala (*Photo 5a&b*). While this is essentially intended for domestic and commercial solid wastes, often, industrial waste and chemicals are discharged in the landfill (*Photo 5b: Notice the paints/chemical wastes at the landfill*). The landfill is also poorly managed that often the solid waste is left exposed, which results in a stench affecting the neigbourhoods.



Source: NAPE File Photo

Photo 5(a&b): Kitezi Land Fill on the outskirts of Kampala City

c). Industrial Pollution of Watercourses in the Lake Victoria basin

Several horticultural estates (*Photo 6*), factories, industries and hotels have mushroomed on the fringes of Lake Victoria in Kampala, Entebbe, Mukono and Jinja districts. Often, these establishments have nutrient rich effluents and lack adequate wastewater treatment and disposal facilities. Consequently, the establishments are inclined to discharge their wastewater directly into the watercourses in their proximity which finally drain into Lake Victoria. Recent studies have revealed substantial nutrient enrichment in the lake (NAPE, 2008) originating from effluents from establishments nearby the Lake. Also, the continued degradation of the Lake shoreline through increased human activity in the area is worsening the siltation problem in the Lake, thus aggravating the nutrient accumulation problem in the Lake. This nutrient accumulation has been depicted in the recent occurrence of blue-green algae blooms in the Lake (*Photo 7*).

Photo 6: A horticulture estate on the fringes of Lake Victoria

Photo 7: Blue-green algae blooms in Lake Victoria

Source: NAPE File Photo

Case Four: Wetland Encroachment in Uganda

Wetlands constitute 13% of the total land area in Uganda. They are important breeding sites for many fish species; contribute significantly to the treatment and purification of wastewater discharged from domestic, commercial and industrial functions and erosion; and act as reservoirs of water that continuously recharge Lake Systems. They are also an important source of livelihood for many urban and rural dwellers. Wetlands are a source of fish, raw materials for crafts and building materials, and offer opportunity for recreation, tourism and water transport. It is believed that a large portion of Kampala City is on an area that was originally a wetland. This probably explains the frequent flooding of many residential areas in and around Kampala (*Photo 8*). Despite their important roles and functions, wetlands in Uganda have for a long time been considered as wastelands and areas of low economic value. This misconception about wetlands is the reason why they have been severely abused today.

Photo 8: Residential building constructed in a wetland on the outskirts of Kampala City

Photo 9: Land filling in a wetland in preparation for industrial construction in Kampala City

Source: NAPE File Photo

The continued encroachment of wetlands is threatening the survival of the fisheries industry, altering the micro- and macro-climate in the region, worsening waterborne diseases and enhancing the occurrence of droughts in many parts of the country. Many wetlands in the vicinity of urban centres have severally been encroached upon for agriculture, domestic settlements (*Photo 8*), commercial and industrial development (*Photo 9*). All this is happening despite the existence of laws preventing such encroachment in the country. This violation of the law is often promoted by the very authorities mandated to uphold the law. For example, wetlands in Rubaga and Namanve divisions in the outskirts of Kampala have been gazetted as industrial parks in violation of the law governing wetlands. The Nakivubo wetland Channel that used to purify floodwater and wastewater from Kampala City before it enters Lake Victoria is now dominated by residential, commercial and industrial establishments and can no longer effectively perform its purification functions. This is also the reason why the problem of Lake nutrient enrichment and algae blooms is prevalent.

Wetlands degradation is aggravated by the fact that the Wetlands Management Department (WMD) of the Ministry of Water and Environment (MWE) mandated to govern wetlands does not have complete powers to operate as an autonomous authority. There is also the problem of duplication of roles, responsibilities and services between the Wetlands Management Department, NEMA, MWE and NFA, UWA, Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Industry and Fisheries (MAAIF). This duplication results in ambiguity on which institution is finally accountable for

Photo 10: Kalerwe - Bwaise wetland channel clogged with plastic waste

Photo 11: Rock excavation without soil erosion mitigation measures is another form of environmental abuse

Source: NAPE File Photo

the management of wetlands and many other natural resources. The high price of land has made it unaffordable to the majority, who finally encroach on wetlands. This is further compounded by the rapidly growing population and the high poverty levels among society.

Other forms of wetland encroachment and degradation include:-

- Dumping of biodegradable and non-biodegradable solid waste materials like polythene bags, empty mineral water bottles and market/butchery plant & animal wastes into wetlands and streams is a common practice in Uganda (*Photo 10*).
- Excavation of sand, rock (*Photo 11*) and mining of clay for brick making to support the construction industry.
- Over exploitation of papyrus, swamp forests, reptiles, animals and other forms of biodiversity for medicine, fuel wood, food and handicraft products.

Conclusion

There is uncontrolled encroachment, degradation and abuse of natural resources and ecosystems in Uganda, despite the existence of policy, legal and institutional frameworks in the country considered among the best on the African continent. This is because of lack of capacity (human and financial) and professional and political commitment to ensure that the existing policy, legal and institutional provisions are adhered to. The duplication and multiplication of roles, responsibilities and services among the different government departments and ministries is complicating natural resources governance and making the exercise excessively expensive for the economy of the country.

The rapidly growing population and the inadequate planning and implementation of national plans are worsening the environmental abuse in the country. This is compounded by the fact that the persons mandated to govern natural resources and the general public do not appreciate the social, economic and environmental values and benefits of these resources to the country. There is need for valuation to determine the values of different resources as basis for decision-making.

Recommendations

- There is need for professional and political commitment within government and its associated institutions to enforce and implement national plans, policy and legal frameworks;
- There is need to streamline the various roles, responsibilities and service provision from the different government organs;
- There is need to build capacity, both human and financial, to enable implementation of national plans and enforcement of the national laws, regulations and guidelines;
- Appropriate planning should be the prerequisite to national development and this should be consultative in nature, involving civil society (communities, NGO/CBOs & the private sector) regarding any development that will be dependent on national natural resources;
- There is need for a culture and practice of jealously preserving areas considered critical habitats, biodiversity centres, important cultural/spiritual sacred sites, and sites of scenic beauty (tourists attractions);
- There is need to compute the value of natural resources in terms of economic, social and environmental benefits as basis for determining whether any given resource is fit for replacement, exploitation for economic gains, etc.
- There is need for continuous inventory and update of the status of different natural resources and ecosystems in the country. This calls for continued research, monitoring and evaluation of natural resources status;
- There is need for continued education and sensitisation of the population on the dangers of environmental abuse in the country;
- There are many international conventions, treaties and protocols that would promote sustainable utilisation and management of natural resources in the country that need to be adopted and domesticated.

Environmental protection in Uganda should be a responsibility of every citizen irrespective of political inclination, religious creed, professional, tribal/ethnic or cultural background

Activists oppose mining in national park

By Gerald Tenywa

ENVIRONMENTALISTS have rejected the proposed plans to mine limestone in part of Queen Elizabeth National Park.

"The public and the Government are being misled that we are in support of mining in the park. There are still so many unresolved issues," said Frank Muramuzi, the executive director of the National Association of Professional Environmentalists.

Two weeks ago, *The New Vision* published a story quoting environmentalists as backing the mining at Dura quarry. But the association last week called a press conference at their offices in Kampala to refute the story.

Muramuzi was flanked by officials from the wildlife society and Abantu Trust who were said to have visited Dura and approved the project.

He said it was illegal to mine in the park because it contravenes the wildlife policy and the Uganda Wildlife Act 2000, adding that the quarrying activities would have adverse environmental effects.

He cited the scaring of elephants and other animals that use part of the park at Dura as a migratory corridor to move between Queen Elizabeth National Park and Kibale National Park.

According to Muramuzi, the anticipated economic gains from the mining had been exaggerated.

"Many of the people employed there come from elsewhere and beyond Uganda. Others are employed as casual labourers and the pay is not good," he said.

An official of the wildlife society, Dr. Chris Bakuneta, noted that tourism was one of the top revenue earners for the country and therefore it did not make sense to eliminate wildlife, which is one of the main attractions.

Environmentalists to sue Hima Cement

SALOME ALWENY & MARTIN LUTHER OKETCH
KAMPALA

ENVIRONMENTALISTS have vowed to sue Hima Cement and all the authorities that approved mining in Dura area, Queen Elizabeth National Park, Kasese District.

"We are not going to sit back. We shall seek court redress," Executive Director of National Association of Professional Environmentalists (Nape) Mr Frank Muramuzi, who did not mention when they would seek the court redress, told a newsgathering at their offices in Wandegeya yesterday.

"We denounce the act of mining in the park because the law of Uganda prohibits such activities in National Parks," Mr Muramuzi added.

Uganda Wildlife Authority (Uwa) last month offered the cement firm a permit for limestone extraction in the park, despite opposition from environmentalists who fear that the activity will affect the wildlife population and jeopardise the tourism industry.

According to Uwa Public Relations Manager, Ms Lillian Nsubuga, the decision to give part of the game park was reached after wide consultations with stakeholders.

In June 7, 2006, the Executive director of the National Environment Management Authority (Nema), Dr Henry Aryamanya Mugisha, also gave the company a certificate of approval with a number of conditions including ensuring that any undesirable environmental impacts that may arise due to implementing the project are mitigated.

"It is important to note that Dura limestone is critical for the sustainability of Hima plant in Kasese because the current reserves at Hima can only last for 8 years. The inclusion of Dura will extend this period to 25 years and will save the country in excess of $1,000,000 in cement imports," once the project is commissioned in 2010, Mr David Njoroge, the Hima Cement General Manager earlier said.

Dr. Chris Bakuneta, a member of the Uganda Wildlife Society said the proposed mining activities will change the general animal behaviour, for example, elephants could become agitated and violent and cause harm to people, crops and property.

Global crisis to hurt Africa mining projects

ANALYSIS

CONAKRY

Financing for mining projects in Africa, where minerals exports have helped drive strong economic growth, could slow down and miners there face tougher credit terms as a result of the global banking crisis.

"The impact is difficult to evaluate at this stage but there's certain to be one," said Gregoire Leforestier, a mines project financing expert with BNP Paribas.

"I think this will happen in three ways: the volumes of available financing will certainly be lower, the duration of available financing will also be shorter and the costs of financing will certainly also increase," Leforestier said on the sidelines of a mining conference in Guinea, the world's top exporter of the bauxite ore used to make aluminium.

Investor interest in African metals and minerals producers like Guinea and DR Congo has soared, driven by rises in metals prices and demand from commodities-hungry Asian economies like China and India.

Oil and minerals exports helped propel sub-Saharan Africa's economic growth to nearly 7% in 2007, according to the International Monetary Fund. The IMF sees growth slowing in 2008 to 6.1% due to growing financial turmoil and rising food and energy prices.

Countries like bauxite-exporter Guinea, whose mining sector provides 85 percent of its hard currency earnings, are bracing for a possible impact from the international credit squeeze.

"This crisis could have collateral effects on African nations like us which are raw materials producers," said Abdoul Karim Sylla, secretary general of Guinea's Mines Ministry.

Before the global banking crisis broke, Guinea had forecast that over $27b would be invested in its mining and energy projects up to 2015.

London-listed Rio Tinto holds the concession for the $6b Simandou iron ore project and is a partner in local bauxite exporter CBG with Alcoa.

Russian aluminium giant RUSAL also mines and refines bauxite in Guinea.

With recent high energy and commodities prices and strong demand encouraging "resource nationalism" across the globe, both Guinea and Congo have launched mining contract reviews seeking to maximise benefits for the state from mining deals.

BNP Paribas' Leforestier said in a tighter financing environment, governments would need to think about keeping the investment environment attractive to bring in project backers.

"You need to give confidence to lenders and investors about the local political and regulatory environment in Guinea, particularly confidence in the respect for contracts. I think that's a very important element," Leforestier said.

However, government and mining company officials said they were optimistic that global demand for Africa's treasure trove of metals and minerals would remain strong, despite the signs of a worldwide recession.

Congo's Deputy Mines Minister Victor Kasongo said he was confident his country's copper and cobalt riches would continue to attract both mining companies and financial backers for them.

"We've got high copper and cobalt content and low cost. We've got the best situation in the world. It's here that you can recuperate your money fastest ... There are strong margins," he said.

Kasongo said that even if smaller operators were forced to halt activities because of financing problems, bigger companies with deeper pockets would step in.

Reuters

Contract cancellations

NEMA chief accused of abetting wetland destruction

By Chris Kiwawulo and Tony Barigye

THE National Environment Management Authority (NEMA) chief, Dr. Aryamanya Mugisha, has been accused of allegedly abetting wetland encroachment.

Leaders from Nakawa Division asked Aryamanya to explain the permits issued to wetland encroachers. The permits, issued on NEMA letter-heads, had the organisations's stamps.

Nakawa security chairman Abdul Mugerwa said several plots in wetlands were issued to the rich and influential people at the expense of the poor.

"Local leaders are not consulted. NEMA issues wetland permits to the rich and evict poor people. The problems in wetlands were brought about by Aryamanya," Mugerwa said.

This was during a meeting between Nakawa local leaders, environment state minister Jessica Eriyo and NEMA officials at Naguru Community Centre last week.

The meeting was held after NEMA cut down local's crops and threatened to evict over 3,000 households from the Kinawataka wetland.

Kampala Central Division chairman Godfrey Nyakana, State House employee Mary Mugyenyi and former Bank of Uganda agricultural economist Charles Gashumba were among the people said to have acquired leases in the Luzira wetland.

Nakawa resident district commissioner Fred Bamwine said he had received several complaints about encroachers who had assaulted the locals.

Aryamanya said he would investigate the matter. "It is illegal for anyone to get a lease in a wetland."

But over 200 locals booed him. "You are pretending. You know what is happening. You are the people who make our President (Yoweri Museveni) appear bad in public. You issue permits and chase away the poor," a local said before Bamwine intervened.

Eriyo apologised for NEMA's laxity in sensitising residents about wetlands but asked for copies of the permits issued by NEMA. She urged the leaders to report people issued with leases in wetlands.

Eriyo pledged to work with the lands minister to cancel the titles issued for wetlands.

Industries and factories located near wetlands will also be audited to establish whether they treat their wastes as required by the law.

Forest authority okays Mabira cut

Fred Muzaale
Kampala

The National Forestry Authority has granted a licence to Uganda Electricity Transmission to cut 69 hectares of Mabira Forest to enable the construction of a new high voltage power line.

The power line will run from Bujagali power station to the main grid through Kawanda and Mutundwe, west of Kampala.

The revelation by National Forestry Authority (NFA) comes at a time when environmentalists are fighting hard to block the government from giving part of Mabira to Mehta to grow sugarcane.

Addressing journalists in Kampala last Thursday, the NFA board chairman, Mr Baguma Isoke, allayed fears that the exercise would have a big impact on the environment.

"NFA granted the licence after a comprehensive assessment of the social, environmental and economic impacts of the line on the forests. UETCL has fulfilled the conditions of mitigation of the project's impact on the forests and complied with the requirements of Nema," Mr Isoke said.

"Impact-mitigation measures will include upgrading of forest management plans and replacement of forest cover to be affected by the route line," he added.

Mr Isoke also asked the government to provide NFA with security personnel to help it fight encroachers on reserves and dangerous illegal pit sawyers.

He said the lack of an armed wing had resulted into many NFA staff being attacked, authority's vehicles vandalised and in some cases NFA female staff were raped.

Mr Isoke said a small law enforcement unit of 12 staff cannot effectively protect 506 forest reserves spread out in the country.

He said NFA would soon embark on a campaign to replant lake shores range districts of Mukono, Rakai, Mpigi, Kalangala, Wakiso, Masaka, and Ssembabule with indigenous tree species.

On the misunderstandings between NFA and Mpigi District officials which resulted in the latter suspending NFA activities in the district, Mr Baguma said the authority would sit with the district officials to resolve the problem.

Mr Baguma urged financial institutions to extend grants to NFA and the private sector to enable them grow trees which he said require a lot of money.

He said only one agency, Sawlog Scheme, was funding tree planting.

NFA also launched a 32-page booklet to educate the public on the need to protect forests.

Museveni directed Source of the Nile giveaway - Mayor

Gov't undermining itself-Nape

MARTIN LUTHER OKETCH &SALOME ALWENY
KAMPALA

A BODY of environmentalists has accused the government and its agencies of flaunting regulations and threatening the natural habitat around Queen Elizabeth National Park.

hectares of land is seen by the environmentalists as a threat to human life and biodiversity in the surrounding communities.

"We are aware that Larfage-Hima have obtained a mining license from the Department of Geological Survey and Mines; have obtained approval from Nema

He said Nape discovered that the mining activities in the area are likely to pollute Lake George, lake Edward and River Dura and River Rwenkerebe, while the local people will also be equally affected by the mining activities.

"We want the project to follow the law. Otherwise, we

A publication of National Association of Professional Environmentalists (NAPE)
© NAPE 2008

National Association of Professional Environmentalists (NAPE)

Tel: +256-414-530181;
Email: nape@nape.or.ug
Website: www.nape.or.ug