

NAPE LOBBY

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Environmental Degradation: Natural Systems Under threat

Uganda's Experience



Funded by Swedish Society for Nature Conservation

Ecosystems degradation costs in Uganda today represent environmental debts worth billions of dollars. Ecosystems degradation is compounded by the swelling population the country is experiencing. This big population, of which more than half are poor, is putting enormous pressure on the available natural resources. Population numbers and poverty have a direct bearing on sustainability.

Ecosystems sustainability crisis is manifested through social, financial, economic, political and environmental problems. We are faced with a set of serious challenges, driven by poverty, ill-planned economic growth, and poorly defined legal regimes that do not take into account long-term sustainability of nature resources.

Wetlands are being reclamation, water supplies drained, forests cut down to give way to industrial establishments, agribusiness and even human settlements. Sadly, this is called development, yet it is done at the expense of natural systems that sustain humanity.



Women and children drawing water from a wetland that is under reclamation near Kampala



Chemical influents from an industrial establishment being emptied in a Kinawataka wetland near Kampala



NAPE staff standing in a part of a degraded forest in Kibale, W. Uganda



Artisanal gold mining in

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EDITORIAL

Many of Uganda's natural ecosystems are undergoing conversion, degradation, and decline in a totally unplanned and uncontrolled manner. Examples include: uncontrolled expansion of agricultural land; erosion of soils and a decline in soil fertility; falling quality and availability of water; unregulated encroachment and degradation of wetlands; encroachment of forest reserves; deforestation and overgrazing of rangelands.

Population outburst in Uganda today is exacerbating the already bad situation. Many people who rely disproportionately on the environment for their basic needs are confronted with environmental problems including soil erosion, declining land productivity and fish stocks, and the spread of alien invasive species. With over 85 percent of the Ugandan workforce involved in agriculture, soil erosion and declining soil fertility are significantly impacting the ability of the poor to meet nutritional needs. As a result, deforestation and encroachment on ecologically sensitive areas (e.g. wetlands) have increased as poor people attempt to secure alternative income sources in the face of growing food insecurity.

The government of Uganda has formulated a number of laws and policies to regulate land use and impacts on the environment. There also a number of agencies put in place enforce these regulations and monitor compliance with the laws. However, the alarming rate at which natural resources are being depleted shows that these laws and policies are not enforced effectively.

Inadequate financial and institutional capacity has been blamed the continuous decline in environmental capacity of the available resource to effectively support livelihoods. On the other hand, greed of a few individuals in powerful positions of governance coupled with the influence of globalization on national development agenda has increased the rate of environmental degradation.

In this issue, NAPE Lobby looks at how environmental degradation is threatening to overturn decades of developments in Uganda.



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Environmental degradation: Impacts and future implications for Uganda

By Betty Obbo

Uganda is grappling with the cost of her inaction to maintain ecosystems balance in some parts of the country. Environmental degradation in Uganda is attributable to two broad factors – human activities that are leading to changes in land use and land cover; and climatic variations which have affected many regions of the country differently.

For the last few years flash floods have been recking havoc in Kasese district, in Western Uganda. The floods are associated with human activities (agriculture and human settlement) at the banks of River Nyamwamba. Mining of Copper and Cobalt by Kilembe Mines Ltd is also said to have exacerbated the situation when the original owners of the mine –a Canadian Company in the 1960s diverted the flow of the river.

Parts Kilembe Hospital flooded



Drivers of environmental degradation

Rapid population growth

Growth of population has been phenomenal in Uganda. This has led to increased demands of resources and increased waste generation thereby pollution of resources. Today Uganda's population is about 37 millions and growing at 3.1 per cent.

In the past four months (January-April) prolonged drought devastated parts of Karamoja region in North-Eastern Uganda leading to severe famine. According press reports, at least eight people have dead while a number remain struggling with finding what to eat.



Karamajongs starving because of lack of food



According to the department of Child Health, Uganda Ministry of Health, approximately 2 million babies are born on daily basis.

Consumptive patterns of society

Consumption levels of society have increased. Per capita energy consumption (in transport, domestic, commercial, industrial sectors) has increased many folds. This is due to improved quality of life styles leading to increase to luxurious patterns adopted by the people. Today many people especially the elite class in prefer drinking bottled water and shop from supermarkets, carrying with them many plastic bags every day.

Ugandans especially the elite class are quickly changing their lifestyles. We are adapting luxurious partners of wasteful consumption. A single household, in one day can take home five plastic bottles of both water and soft drinks. They also take a number of plastic shopping bags. But where do all these go? Certainly in our environment, to degrade it!



Rapid unplanned economic growth

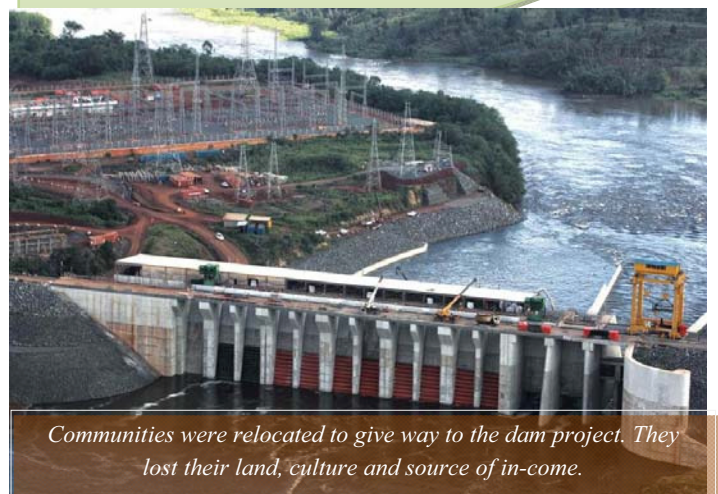
To cater for societal demand for products of various types, industrial growth has to be phenomenal. Uganda's population is growing at 3.1% which puts tremendous pressure on natural resources and also demands significant environmental protection measures to reduce the impact over human health, and ecology.

Development is not supposed to happen at the expense of the natural environment and livelihoods. Many private and foreign investments are profit oriented. They only think about how much money (dollars) the projects put in their pockets. They do not care about the rights of nature and people who directly depend on it for survival. Reckless exploitation of resources leads to its' extinction and this is unsustainable!



Natural forests were cut down and wetlands reclaimed to give way for an industrial establishment in Namanve

Namanve industrial park on Kampala-Jinja highway



Communities were relocated to give way to the dam project. They lost their land, culture and source of in-come.

Bujagali hydropower dam on River Nile in Jinja

Absence of environmental and citizen's concerns in basic national developmental agenda

Many times environmental concerns are not adequately addressed in the national developmental agenda which may lead to substantial economic growth but highly unsustainable. Policies and regulatory frameworks that govern implementation processes of development projects most often do not include the concerns local community and the well-being of the environment on which such projects sit. The rights of nature and the people who directly depend on it are often times violated.

Often time, the general public is not invited to participate in national development processes. This means, some development choices are imposed on them. Public participation in decision-making on development projects reduces conflicts, increases public support and ownership of the projects.



Communities need to be consulted, their voices heard and concerns considered.

Waste management in Uganda: Achieving zero waste is possible

By Our staff reporter

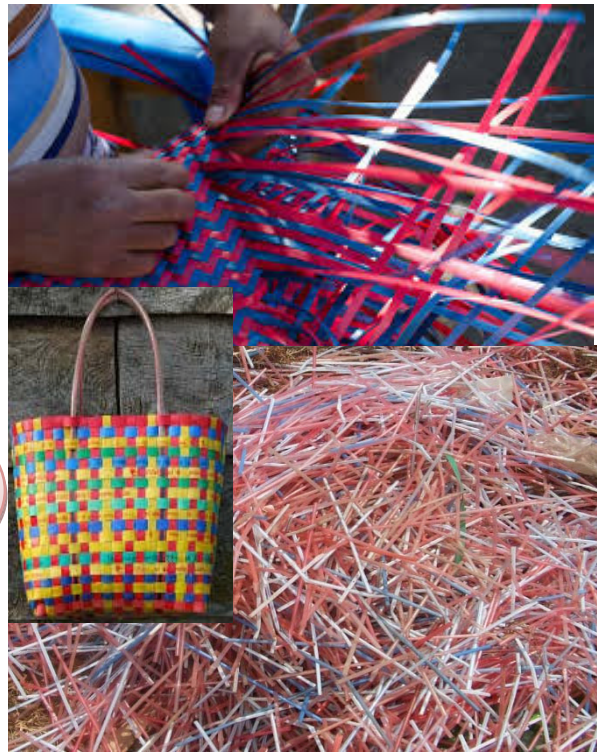
Every community is different. There is no one way to prevent, reduce reuse, recycle, or compost discarded material. Integrating community participation in decision-making will enhance the success of any discard management program. This plan can be adopted at the community, municipal, or national level, depending on which approach will yield the best results in each situation. Also, one can work with many communities to adopt local zero waste goals and the momentum generated can lead towards an eventual national goal.

Target a wide range of materials for reuse, recycling, and composting and keep these materials segregated at the source of generation.



Decentralize waste management by building on local community initiatives using local resources and accommodating the informal sector. Community projects do not need to be relegated to local small efforts. Replicate and expand successful community initiatives. Provide them with an institutional structure that will allow them to thrive and become mainstream. All for decentralized functioning and community efforts rather than an emphasis on one initiative to solve all waste problems.

*Waste is wealth! When we **recycle** these materials and come up with new products like shopping bags, we will be **reusing** the materials and **reduce** waste which would otherwise degrade our environment.*



Adopt a non-incineration discard management plan. Call it a resource management plan if you like, and embrace zero waste as a vision for the future.

Incineration is an unsustainable and obsolete method for dealing with waste. As a waste treatment technology, incinerators are unreliable and produce a secondary waste stream more dangerous than the original. Burning waste in incinerators only reduces the volume of solid waste; it does not dispose of the toxic substances contained in the waste. Worse still, the process of incineration creates the largest source of dioxins, which is one of the most toxic chemicals known to science.

Incinerators emit a wide range of pollutants in their stack gases, ashes and other residues. The filters used to clean incinerator stack gases produce solid and liquid toxic wastes, which also need to be disposed of somewhere!

Make waste prevention, reuse, and repair, recycling, and composting the heart of the plan. Adopt waste elimination goals as well as recycling goals avoid leadership, dialogue, and information on how to move towards a zero waste economy. Decide against privatizing and centralizing waste systems. Seek public input to build broad public support for waste reduction programs and build a network of stakeholders to be involved in the design and implementation of the programs. Make community participation meaningful.



In addition to air and water emissions, incinerators create toxic ash or slag that must then be land filled. This ash contains heavy metals, dioxins, and other pollutants, making it too toxic to reuse, although industry often tries to do so. Incinerators also emit significant quantities of direct greenhouse gases, including carbon dioxide and nitrous oxides that contribute to global climate change.

Compost: Composting is key to achieving 59% and higher diversion levels and doing so cost-effectively. Emphasize backyard or at-home composting followed by community composting.

Compost is organic material that can be added to soil to help plants grow. Food scraps and yard waste currently make up 20 to 30 percent of what we throw away, and should be composted instead. Making compost keeps these materials out of landfills where they take up space and release methane, a potent greenhouse gas.

Benefits of Composting

- Enriches soil, helping retain moisture and suppress plant diseases and pests.
- Reduces the need for chemical fertilizers.
- Encourages the production of beneficial bacteria and fungi that break down organic matter to create humus, a rich nutrient-filled material.
- Reduces methane emissions from landfills and lowers your carbon footprint.

Make program participation convenient and meaningful.

The more households and businesses participating, the more material diverted from disposal. More people will reduce, reuse, recycle, and compost if programs are convenient, easy, and simple. Some ways to make programs convenient include:

- Providing curbside or door to door collection of recyclable with the same frequency curbside collection of trash is provided;
- Providing seasonal and frequent collection of yard trimmings;
- Offering service to all household including multi-family dwellings; Utilizing set-out and collection methods that encourage resident participation as well as yield high –quality, readily marketable materials
- Establishing drop-off sites to augment door-to-door collection

Institute economic incentives that reward waste reduction and recovery over disposal, such as reduced tipping fees for delivering recyclable and compostable materials to drop-sites, tax incentives to encourage businesses and haulers to recycle and pay –as-you-throw fees for trash collection.



There is need to develop a backyard composting education program. One possible fix is for communities to encourage people to build their own bins or dig pits, providing them with instructions and plans. A number of homes with enthusiastic citizens have built

Develop Markets for materials with an eye toward closing the loop, producing high-value end products and linking recycling-based economic development with a larger vision of sustainable community development.

Community-based recyclers are in businesses for the good of the community and often provide services that the market undervalues. The informal sector likewise provides undervalued services and often does so free of charge to waste generators and local government.

Work to hold manufacturers responsible for their products throughout their life-cycle. In particular press for central government’s efforts to work with manufacturers to voluntarily reduce packaging and meet minimum recycled-content standards for products and packaging.

Educate: Education and outreach is critical. Educational and technical assistance programs provide residents and businesses with information about “how” and “why” to reduce, reuse, recycle, and compost.

Does nature have rights: What happens when the rights of nature are violated?

By Our staff reporter

It sounds strange that nature could have rights. Yes, it does. Based on the premise that nature does have rights and these rights need to be acknowledged. Rather than treat nature as property under the law, rights of nature demands that nature in all its life forms has the right to exist, persist, maintain and regenerate its vital cycles. Oftentimes however, the rights of nature have been violated by man. This violation is driven by a fundamental premise that nature is a provider of natural resources to be owned by human societies and treated as public or private property.

The current economic systems today (national and or international) dictate that laws are put in place to control the inherent greediness of man. Humans are an unruly and need laws to keep order to make sure they stay on track. Without laws, human society would quickly descend into chaos.

Nature, on the other hand, shows ordered patterns at all scales: trees grow upright branch, rivers flow in a particular direction, and planetary orbits are periodic, day follows night, seasons alternate, the moon has phases etc. All this happen repeatedly under natural law.

The laws of nature are very different from the laws of man. While the laws of man seek to order and control individual and social behavior so as to make communal life less risky, the laws of nature are deduced from long-term observation of repeatable patterns and trends. On the other hand, the law of humans changes by way of amendments to suite the interests and wishes of the framers.

The law of nature has universal standards; they do not change and they apply throughout the whole cosmos unless physically altered by human actions. When the law of nature is altered, the consequences

are un pleasant, sometimes with serious impacts that are costly and difficult to address. Effects of climate change, instability in human health and the environment among others.

For instance, alteration to the natural flow regimes of rivers and streams and their floodplains and wetlands is recognized as a major factor contributing to loss of biological diversity and ecological function in aquatic ecosystems, including floodplains. These alterations could cause a large number of species, populations or ecological communities that rely on river flows for their short term and long term survival to become threatened. Impacts associated with altering natural flow regimes, include:

- extraction of water which reduces flows, leading to a lower distribution of organic matter on which invertebrates and vertebrates depend on;
- the permanent flooding of wetlands which kills vegetation depending on intermittent flooding, decreasing habitat for invertebrates and water birds as a result;
- riparian zone degradation where changes to flows increases erosion, leading to sedimentation impacts upon aquatic communities;
- deeper and more permanent standing water which permits the establishment and spread of exotic species; and
- changes to the physical, chemical and biological conditions of rivers and streams which alters biota.

In Uganda, conversion of natural forests to meet demand for monoculture agribusiness is leading to deforestation and a range of ecological and social impacts. Forests are giving way to plantations for oil palm, tea, sugar cane and pine among many other crops.

Of increasing concern is the soaring popularity of biofuels. Biofuels are generated from oils extracted from plants such as oil palm - which are often grown on land cleared of natural forests.

What is causing forest conversion?

Rising demand for palm oil, sugar and biodiesel is translating into expanding plantations for these crops especially in developing countries including Uganda. Versatile products like palm oil are found in absolutely everything from food and household products, to make-up and other cosmetics. Today palm oil is also being widely considered as being an alternative to the natural fossil fuels that are rapidly running out, primarily being used as a form of biofuel in the transport industry - hence their popularity. This human 'footprint' on earth shows how our behavior in one part of the world can have negative impact on natural tropical forests and the people living in other part of world.

Cheap land, labour, and government subsidies are creating more and more supply of agricultural goods, and to meet needs for increased production.

Poorly implemented environmental regulations are added incentives for foreign investors to convert forests for plantations, intimidate local land owners so that they are driven off their land.

False solutions to climate change

Pine trees have been marketed widely as one which gives high economic returns. Yes it may be, but has its' bad sides. Scientists have shown that Pine trees are one of the biggest contributors to air pollution. They give off gases that react with airborne chemicals creating tiny, invisible particles that muddy the air. Trees are supposed to absorb carbon dioxide in the atmosphere and reduce Green House Gases.



All the products displayed above contain oil palm

Palm oil production in Uganda is one of the big investments expected to boost the economy and reduce poverty. But this however, is not likely to be the case as both the socio-economic and environmental impacts outweighs the benefits expected.



Pine plantation grown along Kampala - Mubend road. A lot of farmland and natural forests in different parts of the country have been converted to Pine plantations.

Use of chemicals at work place: Impacts on health and the environment

By Our staff reporter

Today's beauty salons can offer a range of services – from hair styling to nail and skin treatments, such as tanning, facials, body wraps, manicures, and make-up applications, as well as retailing many products. There are a wide range of chemicals used in the hair and beauty industry. Many of these chemicals are hazardous to the environment, but are also of concern to human health.

In providing these services, however, a lot of wastes can be generated. The most notable environmental issues for salons are:

- The use of chemical products (dyes, bleaches, solvents)
- Air pollution (odors)
- Water use and wastewater disposal
- Solid Waste (Paper towels, product containers, other packaging)

There are tens of thousands of small and big hair and beauty salons/shops in and around Kampala; some are even located in private homes. While individual beauty businesses may not discharge substantial amounts of wastes, the main problem is the combined impact of chemical and waste discharges from many small businesses.

Tips for proper chemicals handling

- Any employees using chemicals must be trained to use the products appropriately
- Provide protective gears to your workers and clients
- Post signs to remind staff not to rinse or pour chemical products down the sink.
- Use funnels and drip trays to capture any liquid and to recover the product for reuse.
- Always seal products tightly when you are finished to prevent the escape of harmful odours, and to avoid spills.
- Ensure enough air is circulating to clear hazardous fumes from the air
- Keep original containers, and ensure all containers are properly labelled.



Both these ladies are handling chemicals without



What Salon Customers Need to Know

Due to a lack monitoring and inadequate government oversight, many products used in hair and nail salons contain a number of hazardous chemicals that may harm your health.

What Salon Workers Need to Know

Many products used in hair and nail salons contain a number of hazardous chemicals that may pose health risks. That many chemicals, hazardous ingredients can be avoided altogether by purchasing alternative products. For those that can't be avoided, precautions can be taken to protect health risks to both workers and clients.

Long term studies of salon workers have reported higher risks of chronic conditions, including certain cancers, immune diseases, asthma, and higher risk of some birth defects in their children.

Impacts of exposure to chemicals in saloons include: breathing problems, headaches, skin rashes, or other health problems. Unfortunately, salon workers commonly do not report negative health effects associated with their work.

Where to Look for Hazardous Ingredients

- Ingredients in salon products can sometimes be found on the product label, although manufacturers are not required to fully list all ingredients in products sold for professional use.
- Stylists can look at the Safety Data Sheets associated with the product, where some hazardous ingredients (although not all ingredients) must appear. (These sheets should have been sent along with the products).
- Stylists can call the manufacturer's customer service line for more information.

Uganda does not manufacture nail care products. There is need to put in place the necessary regulations and enforcement mechanisms to ensure that all nail care product imported in the country meet the required standards.

Toxic Exposure and Harm in the Nail polish

It is well-known that nail salon products contains toxic chemicals, such as phthalates, toluene, formaldehyde, acetone, methylacrylates and other volatile organic compounds. The health effects of exposure to these chemicals on women day after day, particularly women of childbearing age, are not fully understood. Incredibly, despite the toxic nature of the chemicals, the potential for exposure in poorly ventilated workspaces, and the large population of women exposed, little epidemiological or occupational health research has been conducted on nail salon workers.

There are three top ingredients of concern in many nail products are toluene, formaldehyde and dibutyl phthalate (DBP) which have been linked to both reproductive harm and cancer. Toluene is a clear colorless liquid that acts as a solvent. It is found in many nail products.

Unfortunately, there is little or no enforcement of the Hazard Communication Standard in the nail salon industry.



Tanzania urged to protect miners from mercury poisoning

By The guardian reporter

Most governments including that of Tanzania have failed to take stern measures to prevent testing and of treating mercury related conditions in mining area.

A statement issued by local environmentalists quoted the Human Rights Watch as saying that it has documented the harmful use of mercury by miners in Mali, Tanzania, Ghana, Nigeria and Papua New Guinea.

The World Health Organisation assembly was scheduled to discuss a resolution on the new international treaty on mercury, the Minamata Convention, yesterday.

In Papua New Guinea, a doctor speaking to Human Rights Watch researchers about the impact of mercury on small-scale gold miners said: “We have dozens of cases of mercury poisoning.... They stare blankly at the wall. You cannot talk to them, they are not conversant.”

During a Human Rights Watch investigation in Tanzania, a medical officer in a mining area expressed concern that health workers were “failing to diagnose” people suffering from mercury poisoning because they lacked training.

Mercury is a highly toxic liquid metal that attacks the central nervous system and remains in the environment for long periods of time. It is particularly harmful to children.

Much of the world’s mercury is used in small-scale gold mining, where an estimated 15 million adults and children use it on a regular basis to retrieve the gold, most of them unaware of its health risks. The metal is mixed into the ore to create an amalgam, and when burnt off, it releases toxic vapours.

The new Minamata Convention obliges governments to protect small-scale mining communities from mercury exposure and to develop health strategies for them, including through health worker training, awareness-raising, and data-gathering.



A young boy at a gold mine. He should probably be at school, but he is at a gold mine.

In addition, the treaty calls upon governments to prevent and treat all populations affected by mercury, and to strengthen the capacities of health professionals to cope with mercury-related sickness.

“It is vital for public health services to diagnose, test, and treat mercury exposure, and train and equip health workers to do that,” Kippenberg said. “Health ministries should start by conducting surveys in hotspots to identify patients with symptoms of mercury poisoning. The message health ministers should take home is that they need to act quickly to address the threat of mercury,” he said.

The Minamata Convention on Mercury was adopted with the approval of 139 governments on October 10, 2013, in Japan. It is named after the Japanese town of Minamata, where one of the worst mercury poisoning disasters in history occurred in the 1950s, after a chemical factory polluted the bay with the metal.

According to official figures, 1,700 people died, but the real number is believed to be much higher. In addition, tens of thousands more suffered life-long disabilities, including brain damage, intellectual disabilities, birth defects, and other health problems. Many of the victims were children.

The convention will enter into force when 50 governments have ratified it. So far, only one country – the US – has deposited an “instrument of acceptance” with the United Nations, though many countries are preparing the treaty for parliamentary approval.

Who is to blame for environmental degradation in Uganda?

By Martin Ssebuyira

The state of the environment in Uganda has now reaching worrying levels. It has become normal for people to destroy forests and wetlands regardless of the existing regulations. So who is to blame for this?

Cigarette smokers do it in public, leaving passive smokers exposed to the effects of the vice. Old vehicles and factories emit gases into the atmosphere despite policies to protect the environment.

Encroachers invade wetlands and before the National Environment Management Authority (NEMA)) gets to know of it, they have already put up structures. Others build on weekends and at night. Others hire private security guards to oversee the wetland destruction.

Every day that passes by, Uganda's environment has been sacrificed for development. This poses questions as to what the Environment ministry and government agencies like National Environment Management Authority (NEMA) and the Wetlands Inspection Division are doing to stop the continuous degradation or fix the situation.

NEMA was set up in 1995 to monitor compliance and enforce regulations on the environment in collaboration sister agencies like the Wetland Inspection Division and National Forestry Authority (NFA). The agencies claim they have stood firm against encroachment on forests and some wetlands including lake shores. But the results on ground show otherwise.

More wetlands are continuously being degraded and lake shores are being taken by developers to set up beaches without permits or Environment Impact Assessments.

Uganda established Environmental Police Protection Unit (EPPU) under the Ministry of Internal affairs to work closely with NEMA and other line ministries to protect the environment. This year the Inspector General of Police passed out 150 Environmental Police Officers, but the environment continues to be degraded in the face of all these agencies, which the public look to, and expect to protect the environment.

Ineffective implementation and monitoring of environmental laws and regulations has resulted into destruction of many wetlands and sensitive ecosystems in Uganda.

Government needs to increase the budgets of implementing agencies.



A caterpillar filling soil in Bugolobo wetland near Kampala

Many wetlands around the country and even near Kampala such as, Bugolobi wetland, Murchison Bay wetland, Kyanvubu wetland, Kalidubi wetland in Wakiso and Lutembe Ramsar site have been degraded including forest reserves like Kyewaga Forest Reserve where illegal artisanal mining takes place.

Involving rural communities in natural resources management

By Our staff reporter

Uganda is a least developed country whose people, at least a third are poor due to environmental degradation. Ugandans are crossing the threshold of several vital ecological life-support functions. Loss of forest cover stands at 3.15% annually; and 50% of wetlands are under threat annually. Livelihoods of most Ugandans intimately depend on the environment, both as a source of subsistence and as a basis for production. At this rate of ecosystems degradation, how will Uganda support her development agenda, especially at this era of climate uncertainty?

Environmental degradation is a process through which the natural environment is compromised in some way, reducing biological diversity and the general health of the environment. This process can be entirely natural in origin, or it can be accelerated or caused by human activities. Environmental degradation is recognized as one of the major threats facing Uganda today.

Uganda's population is approximately 37 million. Simple damage for resources and competition is a common issue. Clear-cutting of forest cover, unsustainable development processes, and erosion of soils and water resources are all forms of environmental damage. If the damage is extensive, the environment may not be able to reach a state of balance on its own, and the problem could become compounded.

To reduce environmental degradation, it will require addressing the key challenges -direct drivers of environmental degradation at different levels. It will also require developing and or improving strategies for environmental management.

- Poor integration of environmental policies into other sector policies
- Lack of policy space to evaluate trade-offs between environment outcomes and social or economic objectives.
- Ill-adapted policy formulation and implementation processes
- Well organized political opposition to change.
- Poor understanding of the social, economic, and health costs of environmental degradation
- Inadequate institutional capacity, misalignment of goals, and poor governance
- Limited public awareness

Involving stakeholders including the rural community



Communities in Kalangala meet

Provide community outreach and trainings in farming, crop rotation, livestock rearing, food production, and vocational skills. Programs aim at empowering local farmers and workers while enabling these individuals to generate sustainable incomes.

NAPE in an advocacy meeting with Policy-makers



Advocate for policies, bylaws, and programs that enhance sustainable lake resource management (Lake Victoria).

Create advocacy campaigns and increase community participation in proper sanitation practices, sustainable utilization of natural resources, and control of malaria and waterborne diseases. Initiatives shift environmental and health practices that affect everyday lives.



A multi-stakeholder advocacy campaign meeting on sustainable natural resources management organized by NAPE, 2013



Rural farmers producing improved

Research and implement sustainable farming solutions and alternative income-generating activities that reflect environmentally sound principles.

Research on ways to alleviate food shortages as well as conserve lakes and land resources to enhance living standards and reduce human footprints.



Pineple farmer in Kayunga practicing sustainable farming



Introduce environmental approaches to local communities, such as sustainable agriculture, organic demonstration gardens, fuel efficient stoves, water purification systems, and various agribusiness strategies

Promoting energy conserving cook stoves is good natural resources sustainability

By Our staff reporter

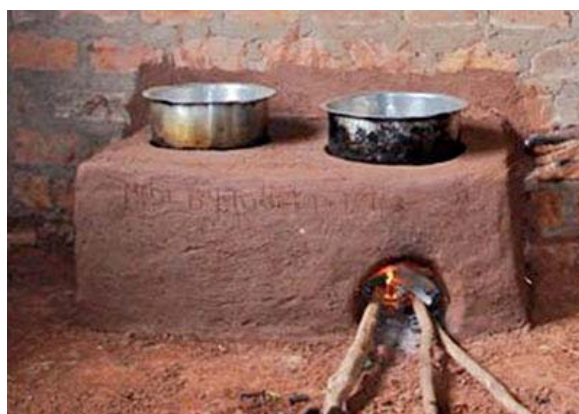
Natural resources conservation must be addressed alongside the actions and strategies that provide means of livelihoods to communities. Promoting local energy conservation initiatives can enhance the well-being of communities and reduce undesirable impact on health and environment.

To stop environmental destruction and promote efficient management of natural resources, there is need to create community awareness and facilitate grass root communities to participation in energy and environment conservation initiatives. One way of doing this is to promote technologies that are designed to improve efficiency in wood fuel use.

Promoting improved energy saving stoves, both at household level and institutional level helps to reduce impact of indoor air pollution which usually affects women and young children in rural poor communities. Energy saving stoves is environmentally safe and clean. Cleaner and efficient cook stoves have been promoted for many years but uptake and availability is still low especially outside of Kampala.

Traditional cooking methods such as the three stone fire and traditional charcoal stove are prevalent across the country and encourage unsustainable use of natural resources.

Communities need to be encouraged to switch to cleaner and environmentally friendly energy cook stoves.



Improved cook stove conserve energy and are ideal even for rural communities



Traditional three stone cook stoves waste a lot of energy and lead to increased deforestation

Involve women in natural resources management for sustainability

By Our staff reporter

Ensuring that women have better access to, and control of, natural resources such as land, water, forests and minerals can improve the chances of long-term peace and sustainable use and management of natural resources.

Gender is a key dimension of social difference that affects people's experiences, concerns and capabilities in managing natural resources. Natural resources management is community based and requires the support of the entire community. Men and women use natural resources in different ways and at different rates and have different allocation and conservation measures. Understanding the different roles and responsibilities of men and women in the natural resource management system is critical to understanding how changes to that system will affect food security, resource management practices (e.g. land, livestock, fisheries), and hence productivity and sustainability.

Environment management, natural resource management and community-based land management will therefore require information, participation, management and commitment from both sexes. Women's participation in community organizations that manage natural resources is not just an equity issue, but also one that affects efficiency and effectiveness since women have a high degree of dependency on the natural environment to perform their daily household tasks. Additionally, women are the ones involved in subsistence activities to include fodder, wood for fuel and construction.

Although women are involved in the management, conservation, and maintenance of natural resources for collective and community consumption, they do not participate in decision-making on natural resources. Yet women often have a detailed knowledge of their local environment that men do not share, and that knowledge is critical to strategies for development and change.

This is because both statutory and cultural laws favor men over women on ownership of natural resources. Women do not have the right to participate in decision making about management of natural resources, of which they are the producers and primary end users.



All natural resources are on land. And yet a combination of statutory and customary laws in Uganda favor male ownership of resources disadvantage women's right to own land, where women make up over 80% of the agricultural labor force and yet only 7% of all women own land.

Although the degradation of natural resources is a generalized idea, its severity, damage and the constraint that it generates vary from one agro-ecological zone to the next.

Allowing women (in rural areas) and appreciating the value of their knowledge can instill confidence among their social groups which suffers daily from inequalities and can help encourage them in constructing a vision for society especially the environment. Participation allows marginalized persons, communities and groups to participate in taking more relevant and equitable decisions for sustainable development in all aspects of their lives.

Wetlands destruction: Government is coming in a bit too late

Re-produced from the national press

Wetlands eviction order hard to enforce – ministry

SULAIMAN KAKAIRE

Developments on wetlands and other hurdles are likely to make it difficult for the government to implement a recent directive to cancel land titles in swampy areas, the Lands ministry spokesperson has said.

In an interview with *The Observer* last week, Denis Obbo admitted that most of the affected land is now encumbered.

Obbo argues that many title holders have paid huge sums of money to the controlling authorities in form of premium and yearly rent. He added that many of them then went ahead to encumber the titles by introducing third parties, some of whom are mortgagees.

"The ministry will find it difficult to immediately cancel such titles, more so if there are developments which may have been done after issuance with approvals from the relevant planning authorities," he said, adding that a special budget should be considered for the likely legal actions.

While announcing the di-



Rose Namayanja

rective last week, Information and National Guidance Minister Rose Namayanja said: "Those [titles] issued before 1995 [when the Constitution was promulgated] may be surrendered by lessees to government under compensatory arrangements."

According to Frank Muramuzi, the executive director of the National Association for Professional Environmentalists (NAPE), the directive is long overdue because of illegalities

related to issuance of the land titles.

"It is government that issued these titles and I am happy that it has recalled them on ground that they were not issued in accordance with the law," said Muramuzi, whose organisation has been at the forefront of efforts to reclaim wetlands from encroachers.

Obbo admitted that although there is a law governing wetland protection and management, it has not always been strictly enforced. This, he says, is often because of wrong information submitted by the Area Land Committees (ALCs), at the time of application for titles. ALCs have the responsibility to inspect and ascertain that the land being applied for is not a wetland.

"It is not the responsibility of office of titles to verify that the land in question is a wetland," Obbo added. "This office only relies on documents, submitted by the ALCs, with approval of the District Land Boards to process and issue these titles."

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