

NAPE LOBBY

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“Nature Experience Uganda”

CONSERVATION BIOLOGY



A Publication of National Association of Professional Environmentalists (NAPE)
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INTRODUCTION

This Bi-monthly NAPE lobby Magazine presents part of the work that NAPE has been doing for the last two months it's on

issues relating to conservation of biodiversity, the articles in this magazine are on the need for independent forest monitoring, the need for support to women with disabilities to increase their income bases , the implication of mercury on community

livelihoods and environment, and the need for the use of sanitary towels amongst the female youth in conservation of nature and their health.

The cover photo is taken from Kasyoha Kitomi showing the forest landscape and the peripheral communities.



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The need for independent forest monitoring in addressing illegal logging in ugandan forests

By: Kureeba David.

Illegal logging in the forest sector has become an issue of major concern. Detective work by advocacy-oriented NGOs has revealed the massive extent of illegality. In Uganda illegal timber probably accounts for the majority of the trade. The legal production of timber is the first step on the road to sustainable forest management.

Uganda's forests are faced with continuously worsening trends through encroachment, deforestation and forest degradation through conversion of forestland to other land uses. Apart from timber, there are many other forest products that are often removed from forests illegally for both commercial and domestic use. They include charcoal, firewood, rattan, sand, clay, poles and others. Illegal charcoal burning in Central Forest Reserves (CFRs) is widespread especially in the reserves within 50km of the main urban areas where there is high demand as almost every household in urban areas uses charcoal.

1.1 What is at stake?

IFM (Global Witness 2005) is a process by which civil society and communities living in and around forest have the opportunity to monitor, document and report suspected illegalities in the timber sector. IFM entails the use of an independent third party that, by agreement with state authorities, provides an assessment of legal compliance, and observation of and guidance on official forest law enforcement systems.

Over the last years, Uganda's forests have faced severe pressures mainly from agricultural conversion as a result of population increase, urban demand for charcoal and wood fuel, over grazing, uncontrolled timber harvesting and policy failures. National en-

Environmental Management Authority (NEMA) reports that over 90% of the households use wood fuel for cooking, (NEMA, 2018). As result, the rate of deforestation is on the rise leading to air pollution, increasing levels of poisonous gases and environmental heat and the resulting effect of Climate change which is being felt now more than ever. According to Ministry of Water and Environment (2016), Forest cover in 1990 was at 24%, in 2000 it was 17 %, 2010 at 13% and in 2015 at 8% which signals that there is enormous decline of forest cover.

Trade in illegal timber is one of the major causes of rampant deforestation and forest degradation through illegal harvesting operations. The illegal timber market remains largely undocumented because it is mainly done informally (NFP, 2013) especially for native species. Forests contribute to national development by supporting the construction industry. Of recent there is an emerging threat of plantation farming especially sugarcane expansion into forest habitats this undermining forest protection (NEMA, 2020).

The National Forest Authority has tried to resist forest encroachment but amidst socio-economic albeit political challenges. It is apparent that government institutions responsible for forest protection will need back-up from other partners such as CSOS in conservation in order to improve on forest monitoring and prevention of further degradation.

Unsatisfactory forest law enforcement, governance and trade (FLEGT) and institutional failures have been noted among the causes of poor performance of the forestry sector. Inadequacies in FLEGT includes flouting of policies, laws, & plans, inadequate stakeholder participation in implementation of the NFP, and little attention given to natural forest management (NFP, 2013). This calls for IFM.

In view of the challenges facing the forests sector

The independent forest monitoring mechanism Independent forest monitoring which is a tool for assessing and strengthening legal compliance in the forest sector by non-state actors. This is a proposed strategy that could improve forest monitoring and prevent habitat degradation and encroachment.

The civil society will complement current efforts in forest governance by government agencies but as an independent approach through civil society organizations in Uganda. An independent forest monitoring mechanism would support forest governance, improve credibility in the forest sector through increased transparency and independent identification of systemic failures in forest governance. This strategy is intended to coordinate civil society efforts in monitoring forest protection and compliance to forest regulations.

- IFM proceeds on the assumption that there is a functioning and legitimate legal framework. This assumption is problematic in many timber-producer societies, and calls for a broader approach than IFM alone.
- Review laws, regulations and guidelines to provide for IFM and then recognise it as an independent arm of forest monitoring.
- Developing a constructive profile for IFM and associated activities that emphasize incentives for good forest management as well as the negative aspects of forest crime, is a challenge that needs to be urgently addressed.
- IFM needs to be complemented by other activities to widen public engagement with the forest sector and to ensure pressure for its sound management.
- In the case of donor-assisted IFM, a clear exit strategy may help create a positive working environment and ensure an emphasis on capacity building and the forging of institutional links and ownership.
- Implement a comprehensive IFM monitoring in Uganda and save nature



Plate 2 : Apiary practiced by communities in Butimba Kikuube district in conservation of nature and improved community incomes as well monitoring the Forest resources.

Harnessing gifts of nature in community ecological governance

By Allan Kalangi

For over five years now, NAPE has been spearheading the food sovereignty campaign mostly in the Bunyoro sub-region. The campaign involves revival of the growing of indigenous seed varieties and practices that traditionally ensured that there was continuity of food supply systems in the entire community.

NAPE started this campaign to counter the push of the government and partner companies to grow genetically modified foods fronting modernising agriculture and making it profitable.

NAPE has always cautioned against reckless shift from traditional methods of agriculture which encouraged participation of everyone to so called modern ones that are in the hands of few people and where machines replace labour force and the seeds to grow are manufactured in laboratories.

To ensure effectiveness of the campaign, NAPE through its Sustainability School Programme and Community Green Radio has been sensitizing the grassroots communities on the importance of not abandoning their traditional methods of agriculture and put themselves at the mercy of seed merchants.

The NAPE approach has involved training and sensitising of the activists and practically setting up multiplication gardens for the indigenous seeds. Also, NAPE has been helping its community partners involved in the food sovereignty campaign with market for their organic products.



The NAPE Forests and Bio-diversity Programme Officer David Kureeba and the African Biodiversity Network (ABN) Communications Officer Venter Mwongera enjoying enturire (a local drink) in calabashes in Butimba village recently.

The women groups have direct beneficiaries and they can now prepare food for functions at a fee



A traditional granary at Mrs. Jessica Buteraba's home in Butimba village, Kikuube District

Not only have the communities gone back to growing indigenous and traditional varieties, they have also revived the practices of storing and serving the food and drinks. They are storing food, mostly grains in traditional granaries and they are using handwoven baskets to serve food.

"If we are to restore our food systems, we also have to think about how our grandparents used to store and serve this food. Therefore, don't get surprised when you come to our homes and we serve you drinks in calabashes," said Mrs. Jessica Buteraba a community educator with Butimba Sustainability village in Hoima District.

Traditionally, nature was providing us with everything to use. For example, look at calabashes.

They are very good and safe containers to use in serving a variety of drinks, yet God gives them to us complete. They are better than plastics. All we need to do is to safeguard our environment and ecosystems.

NAPE finds this approach of Butimba very practical not only in the revival of the traditional seed systems but also in environmental protection. NAPE encourages and supports it.

"PRIORITIZING CONSERVATION AND INCOME GENERATION FOR WOMEN WITH DISABILITIES (WWDS) IN THE FACE OF THE COVID 19 PANDEMIC"

By: Sostine Namanya

Low income levels among Women with disabilities (WWDs) and people with disabilities (PWDs) is a serious problem facing WWDs. Globally, eradication of poverty in all its forms has been identified as the number one goal in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG, 2015). Article 5 of the CRPD prohibits all discrimination on the basis of disability and guarantees to WWDs/PWDs equal and effective protection against discrimination on all grounds including participating in government poverty eradication programs. Nationally, poverty as indicated in the NDP II is one of the binding constraints to growth and development. Poverty and disability in Uganda are impossible to disentangle (Poverty status Report 2002, UBOS). It is estimated that the overall national poverty level is at 21.4 % (approx. 8.6 million people) of the total population. And it is estimated that approximately 80% of PWDs live in conditions of long-term poverty. This estimation therefore shows that among the poor, 24% (2.1 of 8.6 million people) are people with disability implying that for every

four poor persons in Uganda, one of them is a person with disability. But this data may change depending on the current trend in the region since the Kick-off of Oil and Gas exploration where many people were disrupted most especially on the lake shores where many WWDs were participating in fishing auxiliary activities.

The problem is low Income (absolute poverty-monetary poverty) among Women with Disabilities (WWDs) in Hoima and Kikuube Districts found in mid – western Uganda: General poverty status in Uganda: Uganda's population was 34.6 million people (12% having Disabilities) according to the National population and Housing Census of 2014 but now Uganda Bureau of Statistics (UBOS) estimates it to be 42 million people. Nationally, poverty (as indicated in Uganda's National Development Plan Two) is one of the binding constraints to growth and development. Both the World Bank's report of 2019 and the latest official estimates from UBOS put Uganda's poverty rate at 21.4 percent (having increased from 19.7% between 2012 and 2016 and inequality rose as the Gini index went from 41 to 42.8).

Poverty, conservation and COVID – 19 pandemic:

Uganda has not yet updated its poverty level since the outbreak of COVID – 19 but obviously it is now higher than the 21.4% due to the impact of COVID – 19, whose outbreak on March 18 - 2020 has caused two phases of COVID lockdown in the Country.

The Ministry of Finance notes that 65 per cent of Ugandans have lost income due to the pandemic. A UN report shows that over 3 million Ugandans have slipped back into poverty as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic. To make matters worse, the COVID – 19 Pandemic has worsened the poverty status of women with disabilities. The very few “active poor” women with disabilities have lost Capital, others lost their Jobs, the “passive poor” WWDs have had their dependents lose their capital and others lose their Jobs. The very few WWDs who were having small - scale business enterprises had their businesses stop due to the lockdown, rent accumulated, the little capital was eaten, some goods got spoilt and thus most of them have closed the businesses. Some WWDs offer cheap labor services but this is in vain as those people have no money to pay them due to the vicious cycle of poverty from both the COVID and demand side. They do not have the capital to put back their small businesses.

NAPE has organised two learning exchange events/safe space meetings focused on WWD across the Western of Uganda, so as to better understand the barriers of WWD's and this has resulted in better integration of our advocacy work between the women with and without disabilities.

We continue to cultivate relationships with disability organisations like the Hoima Blind women association who are able to signpost WWD for participation and benefiting from our programmes. We also expanded this by further supporting a formation of a women with disability community group in Buliisa called “*Buliisa united women with disabilities*”.

In conclusion, I call upon all development actors, players, partners,

- Identify obstacles to women with disabilities' inclusion in the already existing and the new Economic livelihood programs.
- Create and nurture women-only spaces that are inclusive of all women-including those who are particularly marginalized and experience multiple and intersecting forms of oppression i.e WWDs.
- Embed budgetary lines for provisioning disability support for WWD's during trainings/meetings. These could range from Blind guides, sign language interpreters among others.
- Mobilize support and create opportunities for women with disabilities to take an active role in conservation and income generation as a basis for overcoming abject poverty and other forms of inequalities faced mainly by WWDs .
- Organize meetings/ conferences in spaces that have accessibility needs support i.e PWD's toilets, ramp services etc.



Plate 3: A group photo of feedback loop sessions on conservation and income improvement with WWD's/PWD's in Hoima district

Mercury is a slow killer in the Artisanal Mining Sector In Uganda.

By Peruth Atukwatse.

Gold mining in Uganda is growing at a high rate done by both big companies and small-scale artisanal miners. This growth is however, associated with increased use of mercury in the gold mines especially by the small-scale artisanal miners and its related consequences on human life and the environment.

Currently active gold mining in Uganda is in the districts of Mubende, Busia, Namayingo, Buhweju, Nakapiripiriti, Moroto, Bugiri, and Kassanda. In Uganda, the processing of the gold often takes place in wetlands, near lakes, which directly exposes the ecosystems to mercury and eventually some of it ends up in the air we breathe, and in the fish we eat.

Mercury is persistent in the environment. It evaporates easily and has the capability of long-range transport and contamination of areas far from the source. In the ecosystems, mercury is transformed to organic compounds that are built into microorganisms and enter the food chain in plankton, fish, birds and mammals including humans.

To the humans, Mercury is a slow killer, it is a known neurological toxicant it damages the nervous, digestive, and immune systems and the lungs and kidneys as a result of inhaling, ingesting, or even just physical contact with mercury. It can affect speech, sight and cognitive organs in humans, according to the World Health Organization-WHO, Mercury is equally dangerous for animals.



Plate 4: Mercury free mining training meeting in communities of Kasanda



Plate: Gold mining in the communities of Buhweju using tractors

Non-mercury alternatives are available, better and can post a higher gold recovery. However, the practice of using mercury persists due to many factors, miner habits and misperceptions, and a lack of information on consequences and possible alternatives.

With the minamanta convention on mercury coming into force, parties to the convention have set targets of phasing out mercury use.

Uganda became a signatory to the Minamata Convention in March 2019 and has developed legal frameworks to facilitate mercury phase-out.

NAPE in collaboration with other national and international civil society as well as relevant government bodies, have built partnerships for advocacy to raise awareness on the dangers associated with mercury and to promote less harmful alternative mining practices in ASGM which do not involve the use of mercury.

NAPE has been implementing projects on raising awareness of dangers related to mercury use and as a way of continuing to contribute to the global and national efforts of phasing out mercury use among artisanal gold miners, NAPE is promoting mercury free gold mining methodologies, among them is the use of Borax.

Key about the borax methodology, is that there is increased productivity and high gold recovery that results in better overall economics of miners, borax is readily available on the market and is not illegal. The borax method is cheaper than the amalgamation method even before the health of miners and the environment are looked at.

The mercury methodology has so far been introduced in the districts of Kassanda and Buhweju and the plan is to scale up the intervention to many other districts in the country with availability of resources.

NAPE calls upon likeminded partners and government to invest more in mercury free alternatives that are more user friendly, less harmful and offer higher production of gold.

There is also still need to do intensive awareness raising on the impacts of mercury to human health and environment because its until miners appreciate the dangers that they will be more interested in the safer alternatives.



Above: Risky gold mining methods the endangers the health of the miners



NAPE is promoting mercury free gold mining methodologies, among them is the use of Borax.

Adding borax to the gold concentrate through direct smelting is a safer option compared to mercury.

Embrace organic sanitary towels for clean environment and comfortable life.

By Catherine Kamara.

In today's times, a bigger percentage of women are still living in oblivion about menstrual hygiene and best practices to adhere to. A woman's reproductive life usually spans around 30 to 40 years and unfortunately, they still use sanitary pads made of inorganic materials.

Due to the busy and demanding lifestyle, Women lack access to descent hygiene products that favor their health but also the environment.

Inorganic sanitary pads are prepared using chlorine compounds that contain dioxin which is one the most potent carcinogens in addition to cotton, gel, perfumes and plastic linked to an increased risk of endometriosis, reduced fertility, cervical cancer, UTI, skin rash and many more ailments. Such products also elevate the

existing environmental concern regarding plastic waste disposal. Many modern families and schools for that matter make provisions for dumping sanitary towels however, the impacts to the environment are immense. It is estimated that 12,000 tampons and pads are disposed off by a menstruating woman in her lifetime and that one sanitary pad could take from 500 to 800 years to decompose as the plastic used is not biodegradable.

Government through licensing NGOs that advocate for environment like NAPE, government has played a positive role in making sure that organic sanitary pads are promoted in schools, refugee camps like Kyangwali, and other women communities.

Samples of Organic (Reusable) sanitary towels



Samples of other organic sanitary towels



**Bamboo
Fibre pads**

Government should include in the national bills the banning of importing and manufacturing of inorganic sanitary pads.

NAPE as an environmental organization should provide several trainings to communities and schools on the need to revive the use of the traditional organic sanitary towels, and where necessary arrange for logistics and equipment to be used to manufacture them.

In conclusion, there is need for training on effective menstrual materials, which need less cost-effective management

Probe companies dealing with manufacturing of sanitary pads or other articles to disclose the information on the pads regarding the chemical composition of the pads so that appropriate technologies could be used for their disposal and treatment

Providing guidance regarding menstrual management to adolescent girls and women. Also proposing to the Education sector that menstrual hygiene management be an integral part of education curriculum

Distribution of menstrual products and materials at a free cost in rural schools and educational institutes

Advocating for a new construction system of toilets to be girl/women friendly. For example toilets with installed sanitary napkin vending machines which are semi-automatic and operate by inserting a coin in it. They may contain 30–50 organic sanitary napkins to meet the emergency needs of the girls/women in schools. *See picture aside*



Advocating for a new construction system of toilets to be girl/women friendly.

For example toilets with installed sanitary napkin vending machines which are semiautomatic and operate by inserting a coin in it

Advocating for sufficient space for washing, cleaning private parts and hands and for changing or dealing with stained clothes in schools. To fulfil these requirements, there must be water availability, toilet paper, dustbin, and a sink to wash menstrual products.

Advocating to government to introduce new rules for the safe disposal and treatment of menstrual wastes. Appropriate policy and legal framework is necessary for the management of menstrual wastes.



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