

NAPE LOBBY

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**Impacts of Economic developments on environment
and rural communities**

Uganda's Experience



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It goes without saying that commercial development initiatives often has substantial impacts on the quality and quantity of a community's air, land, water, and biological resources; yet, economic development often takes precedence over environmental protection.

Economic development and environmental quality are equally important components of community growth. Unfortunately, awareness about negative impacts of most commercial development process comes after decades of environmental neglect: sprawling development initiatives, rapid and irreversible conversion of prime agricultural land, loss of unique plant and animal communities, and increased pollution of water and air resources.

The benefits of economic development are often more immediate, important, and obvious to community members and local officials: the creation of good-paying jobs; provision of affordable housing; and diverse shopping opportunities satisfy many of the priority needs and desires of local consumers. The benefits of environmental protection, however, are often less evident and immediate, but are nonetheless important as natural resources continue to become scarce and threats to environmental and human health are ever-present.



Palm oil project in Kalangala has resulted in a number of environmental concerns



Uganda has a number of flower firms near L. Victoria. Flower firms are intensive pesticides users and major polluters of the lake ecosystem and nearby wetlands



In recent years, Pines have been widely promoted and introduced on Ugandan landscape; however pines have negative effects on soil.



The industrial complex in Namanve near Kampala: wetlands and forests have been degraded to give way for industries

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This kind of development is not sustainable, it destroys wetland ecosystems, threatens the lives of communities that depend on this natural resource.



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EDITORIAL

Today Uganda is in transition from our traditional agriculture-based economy to industry-based economy with the aim of improving the general living standards of her people. Government of Uganda is emphasizing value addition on all consumable products from Uganda through increased industrial development and modernization of agriculture. The catch word that usually comes from government is 'economic development for Uganda'

But what does development mean: economic development usually refers to the adoption of new technologies from agriculture-based way of life to industry-based economy, and general improvement in living standards. And this economic development does not come free, it comes at the cost of the environment and the people who depend on it.

To manufacture any products, the raw materials have to come from somewhere. That means damaging the environment. The production process involves creation of pollutants in the atmosphere while the products themselves at the end of their useful lives, will add to the huge waste disposal problem faced by the world's especially developed nations.

Uganda has established an industrial park in Namanve near Kampala, adding to the various industries scattered across the country. These many economic development activities pose a serious threat to the environment. There can be no solution to the environmental problem unless the production and marketing of the unlimited range of consumer products is done in a sustainable manner.

Government needs to re-think development process and put the environment and people at the center of planning for these economic development processes.

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Does one need to destroy to develop?

By Geoffrey Kamese N.

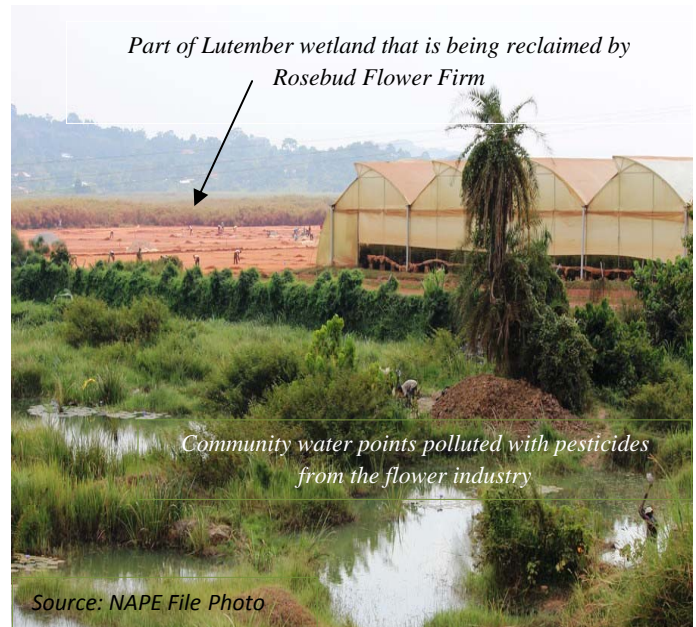
Flowers are luxurious products with high social value and rarely used for food. The demand for these luxurious products has increased in the international market in recent years. People all over the world appreciate that flowers enhance the quality of life and influence human feelings more than words or other gifts.

Uganda government policy of enhancing crop productivity in response to economic growth has lead to speedy increase of agricultural modernization in many forms. Flower forming is one of the sub-sectors in Uganda's agricultural sector that is booming. The flower sub-sector flower is one of Uganda's most promising foreign exchange earners.

Floriculture industry is a new agro industry activity in Uganda which enjoys enormous support from government from many fronts. The growth of the industry overstates the economic significance of the sector to the country, but downplays the social, health and environmental implication of the sector, even though flower farming is blamed for some of its social and environmental shortcoming worldwide.

Flower growing in Uganda is growing with a number of varieties of roses and other cut flowers have been introduced for cultivation. There are many flower firms established near the shores of Lake Victoria. Uganda produces approximately 11.1 million tones of flowers and is the second largest in South Saharan Africa after Nigeria.

Like elsewhere is the world, floriculture industry in Uganda is associated with health, social and environmental impacts. Some of the negative social issues associated with floriculture industry in Uganda include; uncertain job security of workers, poor remuneration, problem women encounter including sexual harassment, workers rights and work conditions.



An agriculture that fails to meet the needs of society, not only as consumers, but also as producers, and citizens will not be supported by society.

The health issues include; workers health and occupational safety, surrounding community health. The environmental issues include pollution of land and water resources, degradation of ecosystems and biodiversity.

The Workers Union in Uganda and some civil society organizations including NAPE have tried to advocate and lobby duty bearers to take action to ensure floriculture industry adheres to the national regulatory frameworks and policies. NAPE has gone ahead to drag one of the flower firms –Rosebud to the courts of law for violating the rights of communities and degrading one of the most important wetlands and a Ramssar sites in Uganda. The court is yet to pronounce itself on this.

Ironies of current development model

By David Kureeba

When we develop something in one place we have to destroy something in another place. We cannot create something from nothing. While we are creating something in one place we have to destroy somewhere else to get the raw materials. We can create chemicals which may do something amazing but the production process also generates toxic wastes and what to do with them? We can create so many things from paper and cardboard but we have to cut down the forests to get the raw materials.

For example, the pulp and paper industry consists of manufacturing enterprises that convert predominantly woody plant material into a wide variety of pulps, papers and paperboards. Typically, paper is made from "pulping" or crushing fibrous plant or woody material into its cellulose components using either friction or chemicals. During this process the waste, or non-cellulose material, is eliminated, as is the water, which is removed using heat and pressure, resulting in paper.



Source: <https://www.google.com/search?q=pulp+and+paper+industry&client>

Economic development means working very hard to create something in one place and to destroy something in another place. If we stand back and look at the "big picture" we might well ask if it is worth all the trouble.

It is ironical that most of the environmental damage, which is now a great concern to many people, is primarily a by-product of manufacturing consumer goods.



Source: <https://www.google.com/search?q=pulp+and+paper+industry>

Commercial Agriculture is a threat to indigenous food systems

By Betty Obbo

Like elsewhere in the world, Uganda's food and farm system is breaking. Market-oriented farming models for profits are the reason for this dilemma. Government of Uganda is encouraging commercialization of the agricultural sector, driven by multinational corporations that aim to introduce 'genetically engineered and or hybrid varieties of crops on the Ugandan landscape supposedly to address food shortages in the face of climate change. In incense, however, Uganda is not yet food insecure. Food distribution may be the problem!

It is true mechanized food production leads to increased food production, and consequently lower food prices. It is also true people like it when food is cheap. But this is a myth! This food is not cheap! The cost of the environment and people's health should not be forgotten in both short and long run. People actually pay many times for this food. In consuming mechanized food products people pay taxes that subsidize farmers, they pay when cleaning-up polluted environments and pay when they treat their diseases. It must be recognized that healthy foods come from healthy agricultural systems with food derived from soils kept in a state of natural fertility. The birth right of all living things is health. This is true for soil, plants, animals and man who make a continuous link.

Government of Uganda is promoting commercialization of the agricultural sector, supposedly to address food insecurity in the country. Incidentally, Uganda has not reached a level of food insecurity. Commercial agriculture requires use of machinery and lots of pesticides/herbicides and has to be done on large chunks of land. Commercialization of agriculture is a political gimmick that aims to suppress local innovations under the influence of corporate companies that are working to



Source: <https://www.google.com/search?q=mechanized+agriculture>

The cornerstones of sustainability are ecological, social, and economic integrity. An agriculture that destroys the productivity of its natural resource base – soil, water, or air – eventually will destroy its ability to produce. Commercial agriculture uses a lot of water and chemicals. All this have an effect on food productivity.

Those corporate companies that promote commercialized agriculture supposedly to feed the word such as Monsanto have patent rights to their products (seeds). These companies are likely to own the world seed market in the near future. Local farmer risk to lose their local seed sovereignty in the name of seed security and as a result poor communities will suffer from food shortages. Commercial

NAPE Starts a Community Radio in Hoima District

By Allan Kalangi

NAPE has started a community radio station – Community Green Radio (Frequency 89.0 FM) in Hoima, in the Uganda’s oil region. The first voice hit the air waves on 1st August, 2014. The Community Green Radio will serve communities in the districts of Hoima, Masindi and Kibaale. Community Green Radio is the first community radio in this region.

Uganda has many radio stations. However, most radio stations are privately owned and only offer commercial or public broadcasting services which do not provide a mechanism for enabling communities, groups, and or individuals to tell their own stories, share experiences and even become creators and contributors of media at no cost. Communities and individuals always do not have their issues easily find space in these commercial radios without financial costs, even if their issues are very pertinent and need to be broadcasted to a wide audience. NAPE has been working with communities in the Uganda’s oil region and these communities are faced with numerous economic, social and environmental problems but their voices do not feature prominently through the available media channels due to financial constraints.

Given the complex nature of environmental, social and economic dynamics in the communities, NAPE felt it fit to amplify the communities voices through a community radio station established within the communities to facilitate and enable community groups and individuals within these communities to gain a voice with which to be heard, and have their concerns addressed by government, Oil Companies and other duty bearers. This community radio will provide communities with opportunity to gain diversity in the programming, and provide a forum for sharing experience, discovering fresh perspectives, and supporting community activity. The community radio will be owned and managed by the communities themselves.



NAPE’s Allan Kalangi responding to questions from listeners.

Source: NAPE File Photo

On August 1, 2014, at 1:00 PM, the first voice came out of the Uganda Community Green Radio live from Hoima in Western Uganda. In the Studios for the first show were, Mr. Geoffrey Kamese, the NAPE Senior Programme Officer in Charge of Administration, Mr. Allan Kalangi, the Manager of the Sustainability School Programme and Mr. Julius Kyamanywa, the Station Manager of the Community Green Radio. The trio was hosted by Mr. Robert Katemburira, the News Editor of the Green Radio. The NAPE representatives in the show explained to the audience the purpose of setting up the community green radio which now carries the slogan, “Baza Green, Hurra Green”.

According to NAPE, the Community Green Radio has been established to fill the gap left by many other radio stations in Uganda in covering environmental issues.



Maiden radio talk show on Community Green Radio. NAPE staff _Robert (C), Julius (R), and Geoffrey (L)

The radio is currently broadcasting through affiliation with Liberty Radio on 89.0 FM. It broadcasts from 1:00 PM-3:30 PM every week from Thursday to Sunday.

The radio is aimed at amplifying the voices of the local communities in the eco-sensitive Bunyoro Region to effectively participate in natural resource management processes.

In the past Bunyoro had huge forests, intact wetlands and rivers flowing to the brim with fresh water but the environment in Bunyoro is now being degraded at a fast rate mostly because of unsustainable methods of agriculture that have seen farmers encroaching on wetlands. Large commercial agriculture for example tobacco growing has also contributed to environmental degradation in the Bunyoro area. The primary role of the radio therefore would be to mobilise the local communities to know their roles and responsibilities in natural resources management and protection of the environment. The radio would also be used to mobilize the communities in the Albertine region to seize up opportunities presented by the oil industry.

The programming for the radio mainly focuses on issues of the environment, culture, farming, fishing, government development programmes, women and youth among others.

Mr. Frank Muramuzi, the Executive Director of NAPE says that the radio will broadcast through affiliation in the initial stages but that plans are under way for independent broadcasting

Comments from beneficiaries of the community Green Radio

Rev. Fred Musimenta a farmer from Butimba village in Hoima District who is a member of the Radio committee said that they were very excited about the coming of the environmental community radio in their region which he hoped would go a long way in mobilizing the local communities to improve their livelihoods especially through good agricultural practices that do not degrade the environment.

NAPE promotes ‘NO to Mining and ‘Yes’ to Life Campaign

By Shillar Kyomugisha Osinde

The rapid growth of extractive industries in Africa has led to the displacement of poor peasant communities from the lands, upon which their livelihoods, well-being and identity rest. Extractive model of development also leads to the degradation and pollution of resources - lands, water sources and air.

There is an urgent need to re-think development practices if communities have to reclaim indigenous food systems and also live a dignified life free of contamination resulting from the impacts of extractive developments. Communities confronted by, and those threatened with impacts of extractive industries and their allies have to be at the forefront of working towards creating a change for the better.

Already some civil society organizations in Africa have come together to form a movement to campaign against extractivism, thanks to the **European Union (EU)**, who are providing financial support to enable these organizations to realize this objective. NAPE is working with other civil society organizations in Africa, to implementing a project aimed at improving their capacities to address problems caused by the extractive industry.

NAPE together with her partners in Africa under the project **“strengthening African Civil Society Networks to respond to rapid growth of extractive industries”** are campaigning against impacts of mining on Food, Water and Sacred Natural Sites in Africa. The partners include; Movement for Ecological Learning and Community Action (MELCA) – Ethiopia, Center for Indigenous knowledge and



Ground contaminated by copper tiling from former Kilembe Copper mines in Kasese, Western Uganda

Source: NAPE File Photo



Members of the mining coalition in Africa pose for a group photo after their meeting

Source: NAPE File Photo

Organizational Development (CIKOD)-Ghana, the Mupo Foundation- South Africa, The Gaia Foundation – United Kingdom and African Biodiversity Network – Kenya. These partners are uniting in solidarity to say **“No to Mining and Yes to Life.”** This was against the background that mining is commonly done in areas that are highly fragile, ecologically sensitive, as well as culturally and spiritually sensitive areas. Some Scholars like Thomas Berry, have described the impact caused by mining on ecosystems and the environment as “Ecocide”

The coalition against mining has come to realize that reviving and strengthening communities` indigenous governance systems, and promoting the Earth law would go a long way in realizing ‘*No to mining and Yes to Life campaign*’.

In Uganda, NAPE is working with some mining-affected communities in Hoima, Buliisa and Kibale districts in the Uganda`s Oil region as well as communities around Katwe Salt Lake in Kasese Sub-region, some national non-governmental organizations, Community-Based organizations based in the oil region, custodians of Sacred Natural Sites and traditional kingdoms and lawyers to promote Natural Laws.

Among other strategies, NAPE is trying to strengthen the capacity of local communities to resist mining and also revive their indigenous community governance systems that are enshrined in their **Sacred Natural Sites** considered by the responsible communities to be of high spiritual, cultural and ecological significance.

Local communities in Africa in general, and in Uganda in particular have since time immemorial successfully used their indigenous governance systems in natural



NAPE's Allan Kalangi speaking to coalition members about their role in promoting sustainable use and management of natural resource.

Source: NAPE File Photo

resources management and food production. Unfortunately, the current extractive model of development is threatening to wipe out local communities` indigenous practices and food systems.

In some places where large-scale mining has been in operation for a while, the ecosystem and the entire food system have been destroyed. This kind of development is only profit-oriented and has little regard for the natural environment and the people who depend on it for their survival.

In an effort to change the status-quo, NAPE has mobilized like-minded stakeholders to form a movement (coalition to campaign against mining) to advocate for protection of indigenous governance systems and promote Earth law or earth jurisprudence (unwritten law) in Africa in general and Uganda in particular.



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