

## VOLUNTARISM AND NATURE CONSERVATION IN UGANDA

By

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It is honourable for one to be a volunteer or to volunteer to do anything. - But before one volunteers to do anything one usually has to bother to find out the nature of voluntary work to be done and possibly where that work is to be performed. Not many people would certainly volunteer to hang in the way Honourable Brutus did after hanging Julius Caesar.

What I am urging my audience to do in this regard is to volunteer to conserve Nature and the place where this should first be done is Uganda. Nature is part of the World of Science and reality. Those who believe in the supremacy of Nature contend that Nature is synonymous with Reality and to be a Naturalist is to take the least risk. Naturalism implies that all beings and events in the Universe are natural. Some people hate being connected with Naturalism for fear of being materialists. Lord Darwin has a much more vast way of looking at Nature.

Naturalism therefore, is a form of belief which has a lot to do with tradition and sometimes divinity. Some Leaders have survived centuries of unrest through the adherence to the power of Nature. This is a serious belief and it is what most people refer to as Natural Law thought to be common to all Mankind and deriving consent from Nature sometimes referred to as God. Natural Law is not taken very seriously in the modern World but it is still a force in a number of communities. Conservatives use it to advocate the liberties of Man and to protect themselves from conflicting ideologies and political pressures. During the recent Gulf War, the United Nations along with Kuwait insisted that the people of Kuwait and their King had their origin in Kuwait and it was a violation of Natural Law and Resolutions No. 50 and 51 to misplace them in the way Saddam Hussein had attempted to do. This as you well know, sparked off the passing of UN Resolutions 661 - 68, hence creating the way for the people of Kuwait to regain the land of their ancestors. Kuwait is a free Nation today.

Edmund Burke a great eighteenth Century Philosopher used the Law of Nature to oppose the French Revolution through his book: Reflections on the French Revolution (1790).

In the words of Burke:

"The Moral favour of the Revolution in France, and its vast speculative schemes of political reconstruction, are causing a devaluation of tradition and inherited values and a thoughtless destruction of the painfully acquired material and spiritual resources of society."

In the same natural fashion, Edmund Burke paved the way for the impeachment of Warren Hastings the Governor General of Bengal from 1772 to 1785. It had not come to Hastings' knowledge that Western traditional laws and legality to government would apply to Bengal. Burke appealed to the concept of the law of Nature, the moral principles rooted in the universal order of things, to which all conditions and races of men were subject.

The Buddhists based in India are much more concerned about the supremacy of Nature. To them everything is derived from Nature and this includes what one would call the Living God. To them Nature is everything. They therefore honour all living things on earth; they don't eat meat because they believe it is a product of the living animal whose life must have been destroyed by someone.

Africans are among the strongest believers in Nature. Before the Europeans came here to preach the word of God related to the teachings of Jesus Christ and the gods who sustained people's moral beliefs had all something to do with Nature and traditional values. Writing on Kikuyu Culture in *Pro Mundi Vita: Studies*, "Christians and the ecological consciousness", No.13, February, 1990, V. Neckbrouck has the following to say:

"For Westerners, the earth is a raw, passive fact, the object of exploitation and economic and industrial profitability. In the Kikuyu tradition on the other hand, the earth has much greater symbolic and religious significance. It is the source of nourishment and it also serves as a link between the living, the ancestors and God."

Among the Bakongo of Zaire, Nature is the domain of the ancestors and the management of all this is the responsibility of Elders. Among the Baganda of Uganda whose origin I have attempted to study, the word Nature has a lot to do with origin. Here the origin is totemical and this is merely the relationship between an animal or plant and a given kinship group best described as a clan.

An individual's origin will be determined by the clan to which he belongs and the specific burial group of his ancestors. The Clan leader or his Assistant at a given funeral rites function in Buganda, will not enthrone the deceased's heir before narrating the burial grounds of his ancestors. I am Lukyamuzi, grandson of Luka Kiribaki ku Mutala Senya, Buddu, I am the grandson of Luyi Mugalagala e Mwalo Buddu, Mutagubya e Nkenge, and Katongole e Milema. This exposition is meant to relate the Nte (Cow) Clan and those who belong to it, towards Nature and its biological origin.

A Muganda by the name of Kayiira will not eat buffalo meat because it is his totem by tradition. (The Scientific name of a Buffalo is SYNCEBUS CAFFER). By virtue of belonging to that clan, it is a taboo for him to eat his totem. Here the buffalo to Kayiira is more than an ordinary animal. It is a component of Nature. The Ganda totemism experience is worth looking at. By belonging to various totems, the Baganda relate their origin to Nature which acts as a mirror to their biological attributes. Kayiira will not eat his totem because of the quasi-ontological relations he shares with the buffalo. Kayiira's wife too, will be very hesitant to eat the buffalo although no law prevents her from enjoying buffalo meat; so might the immediate relatives of the head of the family other than those sharing the same clan with Kayiira. A very close friend of Kayiira the man, might also find difficulties in eating buffalo meat in the presence of his dear friend.

Although the two notions derived from Naturalism as indicated in my earlier observations, are an attempt to understand the concept of Nature Conservation, I intend to look at Nature from the yard-stick of the biology and ethics of living things. Nature Conservation therefore, here stipulates the protection of Natural resources and their habitats.

Voluntarism is the spirit of readiness to take action in period of need. It implies readiness for one to take action to save given situations. The endeavour to save people from pain, burden or tension. The willingness to render service to the needy without compulsion. Voluntarism denotes perseverance and determination to take action even in situations of risks. The International Red-Cross, Africa Watch, Amnesty International,

The Scouts Movement, the World Wide Fund for Nature, The East African Wildlife Society etc. have undertaken a number of ventures to save Man and his Environment from danger.

I propose to look at the ways and means through which Voluntary Organizations and individuals can conserve Nature and even save it from danger and possible demise. What is environmentally at stake that calls for action to be taken in Uganda and Africa in general? To which Voluntary Organizations and individuals is the call directed? What is the relevance of <sup>the</sup> forthcoming Brazil Conference on Environment and Development to what is happening in Uganda and Africa? What are the practical activities which Individuals and Organizations could voluntarily implement? What are the difficulties involved? Why is there need for voluntary action to be taken? What are the disasters which call for action? I will also look at Democracy and Human Rights awareness as a factor which can make the voluntarism spirit flourish, let alone exploit Natural resources for the benefit of the people.

Voluntary work to conserve Uganda's Natural resources might be risky but it is a venture worth undertaking. Uganda is a beautiful Country with a wonderful climate. It is the land of the sun, a land of the lions and a land of the waterfalls. We possess the biggest number of bird species in East Africa. We have some of the most beautiful tree species in Africa despite the increasing rate of deforestation in the Country. We have unique fresh-water lakes and rivers. Our environment unlike many places in Africa, is ever-green. We have the capacity to grow food crops from January to December. Ugandans are known the World-over for being hospitable. They are cool, humble and beautiful. We still have impenetrable forests. There are many more unique values characterized by Uganda which call for action to save its natural resources and habitats. We are a country with divers peoples and cultures and these provide the base for our heritage. It is these characteristics along with many others which call for the Conservation of the Natural Resources of our great country. But why is there need for Uganda's Natural Environment to be protected and conserved? Before Development started eating up our Natural Environment, Man was using his resources rationally and sparingly. He could fish but not over-fish.

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He could hunt but not over-hunt. He could reap fruits from trees but not deplete the supply. He could use some fuel-wood from forests but not fell trees-massively . Man then was acting in ecological balance with his environment.

But as-time-went on, Man's ambitions to produce and utilize more, increased as-population too was rising to unimaginable dimensions. Things-went to the extreme as the Natural Environment became more victimized. The United Nations had to convene a-Global Conference in June 1972 to draw the attention of Governments and the People of-the-World to increasing evidence that Man's development activities-were-producing more harmful effects on the Natural Environment. It is that Stockholm Conference-held 20 years ago-which gave rise to the later formation of what today is known as UNEP based in the Kenyan capital, Nairobi. One of the fundamental observations made-at-Stockholm was that Economic and social development is essential for ensuring a favourable living and working environment for man and for creating conditions on earth which are necessary for the improvement of life.

Fifteen years after the-Stockholm Conference, the World got more concerned about what was happening. This was after noting symptoms of global environmental decline, natural resource depletion and human deprivation. The UN established the World Commission on Environment and Development which it later asked to formulate a Global Agenda for Change. Dr. Gro Harlem Brundtland has since then been the head of that important Commission. Lady Brundtland has summed up the objectives of the Commission as follows:

"We must effectively harmonize our production with our environment, if we are to survive, and we must do so in a way that brings marked improvement in the lives of those who now suffer most. We must create a World where more equitable distribution of goods, social justice for all and democratic participation of citizens in decisions affecting their own development, are the new standards for human progress."

It would be wrong to say that with regard to what is happening World-wide, nothing positive has been achieved. Something has been achieved in the form of environmental awareness. Today concepts like environmental degradation, green-house effects,

depletion of the ozone layer, desertification, marine pollution, industrial pollution and deforestation possess some meaning when they are spoken out. But there is a crisis in the World, Africa and Uganda.

There is still need for the people of the World to appreciate that they are an integral part of the ecosystem which is incomplete if some of the resources are destroyed. We all need to get more concerned about the wholeness of Nature and creation. When man attempted to destroy himself and the rest of the ecosystem through the Nagasaki Hiroshima bombardments in Japan during the second World War, the entire human race was concerned. Those who throw the bombs did not know to what extent they would exterminate the human race-- they were testing their strength. Today we still recall those catastrophes.

It is not only the Nagasaki and Hiroshima bombs which have created more awareness about the danger which faces Nature today. Within the last two decades we have had a number of natural and man-made disasters. These include: The Chernobyl nuclear plant tragedy in what used to be called the USSR, Bhopal gas in India which killed a number of people while at the same time causing a lot of damage to the environment, Earthquakes in Armenia and Eastern Asia, the three-mile island accident in U.S., the Sahel and Ethiopia draughts in Africa and of recent, the Pinatubo Volcanic eruptions in Philippines which left thousands of people homeless.

Indeed some disasters are natural but again we have experienced a few disasters which have a direct link with Man's interference with the environment and exacerbating such effects. A number of naturalists have questioned the journey to the moon by the American and Soviet Astronauts. These naturalists attribute recent disasters to God's annoyance. They argue that all those Air crashes and earthquakes have occurred because Man annoyed Nature. Man is one of the heavenly creations whose powers have got a limit. "By walking to the Moon, the astronauts must have challenged God, the creator of everything," the Naturalists conclude.

What else is internationally at stake? From the most recent State of the Environment Report submitted to the UN by UNEP's Director Mustafa Tolba, a number of things are at stake. For over

and you all know the amount of damage this exercise has caused to the ozone-layer. We are experiencing acute climatic changes. The amount of gas emitted into the atmosphere since the oil-fields of Kuwait started burning, is immense. The damage which the Kuwait oil-field gases have caused affects ocean coastlines, land and the atmosphere and might continue to do so for many decades to come. As a result of this catastrophe, neighbouring areas in the Gulf Zone are threatened by oil spills, acid rain and atmospheric pollution. In Kabale, Kigezi, once known as the Switzerland of Africa, fifteen years ago, one needed several blankets to guard oneself from strong cold winds, today you needn't have a blanket to spend a night in anyone hotel in Kabale.

Kigezi is an area of beautiful landscapes found in South-western Uganda. Global Warming will affect the World weather system and areas like Uganda which have never experienced severe storms could always be affected. Uganda's weather system has changed a great deal - planting seasons too have changed. One year might be rainy and the following one might be dry. Global Warming will bring about high temperatures which will force sea levels to rise, hence causing floods in deltaic areas including Asia, Egypt and a number of coastal areas in Africa. Seas are likely to move inland with ground-water mixing with sea-water and the consequences will be fresh water being poisoned by salinity.

Rivers, lakes and plains will flood, hence causing soil erosion. Fish which feeds a big part of the developing World, will also decrease significantly. Global warming will also cause adverse effects on Human Populations and National Economies.

Scientists have found that the quantity of gases like Carbon dioxide, methane, Nitrous Oxide, Chlorofluorocarbons is increasing in the Earth's atmosphere. It is now widely believed that these gases will trap the sun's heat and heat up the earth hence causing greenhouse effects or global warming.

CARBON DIOXIDE (Co2) is the major greenhouse gas amounting to 55% of Global warming. Four-fifth of all carbon dioxide emitted through human activities comes from fossil fuels, coal, oil and gas - the rest of it comes from tropical deforestation. You can imagine how



much Co<sub>2</sub> is emitted from the 500 million cars moving around the World every day.

What is even more worrying here is that while developing Countries have not contributed so much to the problem of Global Warming, they are most hit by its impacts. Global warming will make dry areas become drier and wet ones, wetter.

#### POVERTY IN AFRICA

Poverty is becoming a matter of grave concern in so far our natural environment is concerned. Poverty is forcing Africans to situations of increased gas emissions. The Industrialized World emits 75% of all the greenhouse gases from Human activity and the rate of the emissions keeps on going up by 1% each year. In developing Countries including Africa where 75% of the World Population lives, gas emissions increase at the rate of 6% per year.

A lot of destruction caused by man to the environment has something to do with poverty. In Africa for example, the Population is rising year after year and with the prevailing scourge of the AIDS killer disease, maintenance of life has become a very expensive and unreliable factor. But as President Daniel Moi recently observed:

"It is going to be difficult for the African Countries to fully adjust their economies if they do not have access to environmentally sound technologies and scientific knowledge on ways of managing the Environment."

(see Nairobi Declaration on Climatic Change  
2-4 May 1990)

Because of this abject poverty line, a number of people in Africa are forced to succumb to loose trading and destructive farming practices to earn a living.

The problems are immense. On one hand is the already accumulated debt burden by developing Countries and on the other is the growing need for an expanding Population. Our resources are meagre but they should be exploited for the benefit of the masses. It is not so in Africa today, apparently. Stella Ogbuagu of the University of Calaba in Nigeria sums it up in the following words:

"Whatever meagre resources that are available to any African Nation .... should be judiciously applied to solving the basic welfare needs of the Country's Population." (ibid page 8)

The poverty burden has contributed a lot to the destruction of the Natural environment. In Africa, it is always the poor who hate family-planning methods. They would like to have as many children as possible because they are not sure that all will survive the scares of Malaria and Malnutrition. And Africa being what it is, has no guaranteed welfare system to care for her people in old age. The more children one spares the more chances of survival there are for him in terms of care at old age.

The growing poverty line among Countries in the South continues to pose more environmental burdens. Most Countries in the South will not say they are well-off financially, but they also will not refuse to shoulder a debt burden with hopes of development in years ahead. In the process of this, the South transfers about US\$ 50 billion to the North each year and over US\$ 200 billion is lost by the South in brain-drain, declining terms of trade and protectionist measures in the industrialized Countries. Say in the case of Uganda, it is the IMF and the World Bank to dictate the priorities - it is for this reason that a good number of Countries in the South have almost no say in investing in Education, Health and the Natural Environment.

The World's cultural diversity, which is the historical outcome of the World's ecological diversity, is today getting more and more subjugated and damaged by the dominant economic and technological processes. The end-result is violence and suppressed populations trying to re-assert their cultural identities towards a more democratic order. Cases in Eastern Europe are not entirely political, they are ecological as well. The recent crumbling of the Soviet Empire is a good case in point.

This is a serious issue. What is happening now is that both the Socialist Countries and the debt-burdened Countries of the South are suffering from predatory-natural resource - use patterns. If this is not altered, equitable and sustainable development are not likely to be forthcoming. Many Countries in the South are today trapped by the debt burden. Prevailing development programmes

in the South due to this debt, are more or less a replica of neo-protectionism from industrialized Countries. These obstacles must be removed to create a new development programme for the South. The major responsibility for global economic restructuring to deal with the global ecological crisis rests on the Northern countries, which brought about all the ecological problems through their profligate and wasteful consumption of natural resources.

Assuming that the North will realize its responsibility to help the South restructure its economies, a solution to bring about ecological and political equality in the South should be found. The Southern governments must restructure their economies in a manner which ensures self trust in the use and management their natural resources. There must be harmony at all levels and the only way human beings can live in harmony with one another and with nature, is through respect for cultural plurality. With regard to this imbalance, there is need for people in the South including Uganda to look at issues of growth with a spirit of sustainable development. Issues pertaining to equity are crucial in so far as sustainable development. Grass-root people must freely set their agendas and they must be consulted on the form of development programmes in the offing. What they take to be their priority areas of development must be taken seriously. Voluntary work to save Nature from depletion will therefore necessitate the establishment of a democratic order free from monolithic subjugation.

A special issue of Ecoforum on sustainable development has summed up its prerequisites in this manner:

"Sustainable development is only meaningful within the context where people set their own development agendas on which others would build and strengthen. It is therefore that development which seeks a realignment of national, regional and global development policies towards a people-centred vision that values life and cultural diversity, acknowledges our reality as voyagers on spaceship Earth, accepts our responsibility for the stewardship of the Earth's resources for future generations, and equates development with improvements in the quality of life of every individual. Democracy and self-reliance

are two important factors here. Human rights too have a crucial role to ensure that development addresses itself to the three NGPs: Gross National product; Gross Nature Product; and Gross National Poverty."

See Ecoforum, (special issue, Vol.15: 4 Dec. 1991).

The other issue which is of importance to volunteers in the conservation of Nature is that pertaining to shelter and hazardous waste. Development has become a complex issue in recent years. Meaningful development may be difficult to attain without a resort to industrial production. Most developing Countries urge their subjects to move to rural areas to expand their Agricultural practices while at the same time causing harm to the natural environment. It is estimated that by the year 2000, 18 out of 24 cities of over 10 million inhabitants will be in the developing Countries. You can imagine what the urban environment will be like in Africa in regard to the living standards of people. Volunteers must address themselves to the issue of shelter. I am stressing the word shelter because a Human being's shelter is his immediate environment. Man's protection therefore, has a lot to do with shelter as wildlife has a lot to do with National parks. It is after securing Man's shelter that one will then think about the protection of his diverse cultures and other important values. Developing Countries must therefore address themselves to the issue of Population control and family planning. Population control is an issue which Africans must address themselves to very seriously. We need the company of men and women but at the same time we should be able to live in harmony with one another and this obviously, is difficult in a congested atmosphere. Prof. Mathai Wangari, a distinguished Kenyan environmentalist recently discouraged the development of a 60 - storeyed skyscraper in Nairobi on that basis.

This paper is still concerned about the issue of poverty as a notable source of environmental degradation in Africa.

Volunteers like Friends of the Earth, IDOC, Elsa Wildlife Animal Appeal, African Wildlife Leadership Foundation, and many others should rise up and do something about the issues I have attempted to raise above. Individuals too, should come up to save the Universe from depletion. By declaring himself a victim

of the AIDS scourge, in 1989, the late reknown Ugandan pop-singer, Philly B. Lutaaya contributed a lot in saving the human race from the contraction of the killer disease. Jane Goodall is still struggling to save the lives of the chimpanzee. Michael Gimck died in an air clash on his father's mission to save the Serengeti National Park. In his tireless efforts to save the ~~Manube~~, an Austrian psychiatrist, Dr. Konrad Lorenz in his great book of literature, "Man meets dog", he describes Nature and the ~~Manube~~ thus:

"It is an oasis of virgin nature in which Red and Roe deer, herons and cormorants have survived the vicissitudes even of the last terrible war."

(see WWF News dec. 1987)

Okot P'Bitek has saved the Dingi Dingi dance in Northern Uganda, through the unique song of Lawino; WWF has saved the Panda of China, Mafabi is trying to save the Ugandan wetlands; Tom Strusaker tried to save Kibale Forest and Joy Adamson died miserably while trying to paint a Giraffe in one of the Kenyan National Parks. Ndyakira Amooti should be getting some international honour soon in respect of his devotion to the cause of Nature in Uganda. I tried to save the Bat-Valley Sanctuary without much success. Howard Schissel, a Natural Resources expert based in Francophone Africa, recently revealed (see Africa Report Sept. to October 1988) that at least 10 African Countries were in recent years implicated in toxic disposal deals. In the case of Uganda, the Weekly Topic has on several occasions revealed sales of expired capsules and Aspirin in some drug stores in Kampala. The Uganda Government has tried to stop the open sale of such drugs good or bad ones in places like Baganda Bus Park in Nakivubo area in Kampala. In West Africa, the dumping of toxic waste, industrial and pharmaceutical residues and even deadly radioactive materials in Africa, recently overshadowed most of the deliberations of the Lome talks.

A number of African Countries have vast tracks of unused land for possible dumping purposes. Some do not see any harm in dealing with big powers on matters concerning the possible supply of a dumping ground. It has been learnt for example,

that an American company named the Colorado - based Nedlog Technology Group Inc. in 1979 tried to offer Sierra Leone \$ 25 million for the use of its territory for waste disposal. Under strong monitoring pressure from Newspapers and environmental activists, former President Siaka Stevens was forced to backtrack on the deal.

The Africa Report of Sept. - October 1988 has also revealed that in 1987, Djibouti turned down 2,100 tons of chemical waste that were shipped from the Italian port of Carrara under Jelly Wax aegis. The Italian Green party warned that vessels loaded with toxic trash were leaving Italian Ports in even growing numbers. Few took heed of it and it was only when Intercontract signed a megawaste disposal deal with Guinea-Bissau that the full dimensions of the waste trade in Africa started bubbling on the surface. Voluntary Organizations including all those which have been forced to become Political Parties like the Greens of Germany, should always be on the look out to report such mal-practices. As we prepare ourselves for the revival of a multi-party Democracy, it might be necessary for Environmental Societies in Uganda to think of establishing a programme through which their Nature Conservation Voice can directly be represented in Parliament.

I took the trouble to look at the Directory of non-Government Organizations in Uganda and I also physically visited some of their offices. It was a tussle for me and my Research Assistant to get what we wanted. There is a lot of bureaucracy in those offices. A good number of the officials one would have liked to talk to, are never in their offices. The junior officers who should otherwise be playing their proper role seem to have no information at all; if they have, then they are not supposed to reveal official information to the General Public Especially the Researchers. But what secrets are they keeping away from the Public? What information do Researchers need from NGOs? It is usually the form of activities they carry out, let alone their relationship to certain goals.

Those who prepared the present Directory did a wonderful job although a lot has to be done. I have spotted about 240 NGOs,

50 of which are generally religious in nature. My mission was basically environmental, designed to relate the role of NGOs to the need for action to be taken in the field of Nature Conservation. What I found interesting is that not all those concerned know that their structures of work have anything to do with Nature protection. My mission was not directed to the bosses of the NGO establishments as is always the case. I had to talk to the bosses as well as their subordinates. Nearly 50% of all the registered NGOs have something to do with the Natural Environment but very few of them know the form of role they are supposed to play. One could look at the Family Planning Association of Uganda. I have already pointed out that my research mission was designed in such a way that I needed to talk to the bosses and their subordinates. If you want to find out to what extent the ideas of a given NGO have penetrated the minds of people, you don't begin by talking to the General Secretary, you speak to the common members provided they are real members of that given Society. I have had occasion to talk to the members of the Family Planning Association of Uganda. Very few of the members of FPAU knew that their Association has anything to do with the Environment. All that FPAU members generally know is that their Association ensures that those who want good birth-control methods, let alone contraceptives, go to them. Very few of them know that population is an environmental issue with a lot to do with the interpretation of Nature's significance to Man.

Figure I: ENVIRONMENTAL AIMS, GOALS, & OBJECTIVES OF THE FOLLOWING NGOs.

Organization	Activity	Approach	Response
TASO	Treatment of HIV Victims	Specific	Good
Wildlife Societies	Wildlife Awareness	Specific	Good
Scouts	Environmental Awareness	General	Very Good
Religious Groups	Life after death and Human Rights	General	Good
Red Cross	Disaster Preparedness	General	Very Good
Women in Tree-planting	Tree-planting	Specific	Good

Diagram 2: ASSESSMENT OF VOLUNTARY ORGANIZATIONS' INVOLVEMENT  
IN NATURE CONSERVATION (UGANDA)

Organizations	Nature Awareness	Involvement	Action	Results	Constraints
TASO	Fair	Fair	Good	Good	Infection
Wildlife Societies	Very Good	Good	Fair	Fair	Financial
Red-Cross	Good	Very Good	Very Good	Good	Awareness Disasters
Religious Groups	Fair	None	None	Fair	Awareness
Scouts	Good	Good	Good	Good	Financial
Women in Tree Planting	Fair	Good	Fair	Fair	Financial

Assessment of NGO Involvement.

In the two diagrams shown on pages 14 and 15, I have tried to relate the activities, approaches and responses of six NGOs to the field of Environmental protection and Conservation. Figure 1 is specifically trying to state the general objectives of the NGOs mentioned. In Figure 2, I try to assess the involvement of the six NGOs in the field of Nature Conservation and my parameters include Nature awareness, Extent of involvement, Action, Results and Constraints. Religious Organizations for example, have a very forceful platform but they have not shown much concern about Nature Conservation issues. Some of them think that by over-emphasizing the significance of Nature to Man, there is a tendency for God to be ignored. Most Wildlife Societies lack funding and tend to attract very few effective employees. TASO is an environmental Organization but its Staff may not know the extent to which it can environmentally get involved in Nature Conservation issues. Women in Tree-planting need to design a broader Nature Protection Programme than the one specifically devoted to Tree-planting.

The Scouts and Uganda Red-Cross impressed me very much. Their programmes are broad and can cater for a diversity of environmental interests within their membership. The general impression I got from questionnaires I distributed was that the broader the Nature Protection Programme is, the more it attempts to embrace a diversity



of interests - this is still a big constraint in priority lists for a number of NGOs in this Country.

PRIORITY AREAS OF NATURE CONSERVATION IN UGANDA.

The New Vision Editorial of 27th August 1990 said the following about what one would refer to as priority areas for Nature protection in Uganda.

"The Natural Environment is threatened.. Water levels are falling. Drought and poor rainfall has affected the entire Country. Poor soil fertility and erosion are prevalent in Western Uganda. There are landslides in the Rwenzori, Lake Kyoga is drying out - all these are massive results of deforestation."

This alarming rate of environmental degradation has certainly got a lot to do with poverty. Poverty is the main cause of environmental degradation in this Country today and a solution to it will certainly ease the resources and environmental management burden. Before the coming of the NRM Government there were alarming instances of environmental decay other than poverty. All the beautiful Lodges like Pakuba, Ghobe and Paraa were destroyed by past military regimes not specifically for monetary gains purposes. They were destroyed through rebel activities and related instances of military unrest. Prof. Alan Hamilton once a Makerere don observes in his book, "Deforestation in Uganda" that the attempt for Uganda to re-instate her Natural environmental harmony will have a lot to do with the form of Government which reigns depending to how much respect it attaches to the economic policy and security situation of the country..

All Voluntary Organizations including the Government should look at the Deforestation issue seriously. Volunteers should be able to speak out the values of our Forests. They are a habitat for a number of animals especially the Primates. They are a source of rain, food, fuel-wood, timber and fodder supplies. A WWF Forestry Report recently stated that over half of the World's Forestry areas have dilapidated through Human greed and the present rate of deforestation World-wide is beyond 11 million Hectares each year. Over 1 Billion people in the world today face fire-wood and fodder shortages. Due to the destructive Human processes, a number of

Uganda rare species have become extinct.

Trees provide shelter, and an environment without them would be chaotic. A number of forest species have contributed a lot to the discovery of effective human medicines like chloroquine and penicillin. A lot of what Ugandans refer to as traditional medicine has a lot to do with Forests. In areas where forests reign, lie gods other than Christ.

#### Need to Conserve Uganda's Forests.

With the increasing rate of poverty in Uganda, our forests are highly threatened by man's ambition to get wealth. Land occupied by Uganda's Rain Forests amounts to less than 3% of the Country's total land surface. The Voluntary spirit among Organizations and individuals should try to interest the general public about the need for each forest to be preserved. Each forest is unique calling for unique protective measures. Rare species like the Red Colubus Monkey and the Mountain Gorilla are found in Ugandan forests. The Forestry authorities say that Uganda has some 826 Forest Reserves.

#### Action:

Nature conservation volunteers need some assistance from the Government in regard to the protection of Forests. In the recent Paper presented by Mr. E. Tumusiime-Mutebile, the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Planning and Economic Development to the Conference on Shelter and Economic Development, (14-16 Jan. 1992), what the Government envisages to consider in its Natural Environment Action Plan does not sufficiently address itself to the Forestry protection issue. Forestry Conservation means much more than what Mutebile addresses in the form of Tree-planting activities and reclamation of Land. Mutebile's paper adds that local authorities shall educate the masses on the issue of tree-replacement. To what extent are our RCs in their respective Divisions informed about Tree-planting? The Ps should know that there are cases where local authorities due to ignorance and short-sightedness have contributed a great deal to the demise of the forests. A case in point is Mabira Forest where local authorities have caused nearly one third of its destruction due to economic gains and short-sightedness. A problem of this kind may not be

solved when our administrative units lack viability in politics and economics. They should be viable to attract meaningful power administration. A good number of our Environmental NGOs are National in their frame-work and can capably save forests from Wanton destruction given the financial resources and a conducive atmosphere.

The proximate reasons for the destruction of our forest treasure are light and given a democratic environment where there is rule of Law and Security, an appropriate solution can be found.

A. General Problems facing our Forests are as follows:-

1. Illegal Agricultural encroachment in Forest Reserves;
2. Uncontrolled exploitation of Timber, Charcoal and fuel-wood;
3. Over-concentration by the Rural People on tree-products as a Source of Energy;
4. Lack of proper Forest Management and appropriate decentralized Research.

These issues should seriously be addressed by the Volunteers.

B. The Ugandan Government has not seriously addressed itself to the issue of population growth. Concerned officials in this country have not come out in the open to encourage Family Planning Methods. Many of them are of the view that due to the rampant destruction of lives by the AIDS scourge, it is probably unwise to emphasize Family Planning Methods.

C. In order for Research to be encouraged I mean appropriate and relevant Research, it is necessary for Forests to be graded.

D. Through the Ministry of Tourism, Wildlife and Antiquities, there is also need for Forestry tourism to be encouraged before the local and International markets. We seem to have over-stressed wildlife tourism on the basis of National Parks and the Zoos. We should change our direction of priorities in Tourism.

#### Voluntarism and Wildlife:

Wildlife is one of the most exciting areas which could make Uganda a Paradise. Voluntary Organizations should emulate the impressionism of Abraham Lincoln of USA who once said that the recognition of the Rights of Animals is the responsibility of the whole Human Being.

We possess some of the most beautiful National Parks in Africa and perhaps the most glamorous water-falls in the World. Lincoln was right in what he said. All living things have a right to live. No man has a right to exterminate the other. We are blessed with a rich diversity of Wildlife in the form of flora and fauna in our seven National Parks, Forests and Game Reserves. We also have a spectacular species of people perhaps found nowhere in Africa. We have some 11 Game Reserves, 7 controlled hunting areas and 14 Animal sanctuaries. We have however lost a lot of wildlife species due to political instability. 90% of our elephants have vanished - the white Rhino is believed to be extinct and until recently we have had between 8 - 10 gorillas only. It is said that some extra gorillas have returned as result of the on-going war in Rwanda.

Nature lovers and promoters need to be broad-minded. The protection of the Whale in the Japanese waters is as important to us as it is to the Japanese people. Of equal importance to us, <sup>as</sup> is the protection of the Mountains Nyaras of Ethiopia and the Mauritius Kestrel.

Over 360 species and sub-species of vertebrates, mammals, birds, reptiles, amphibians and fish are today believed to be extinct. These include the Barbary lion (*Panthera Leo Barbarus*) of North Africa 1922; the cape lion (*panthera leo melanochaitus*) of South Africa 1865 and the pink headed duck (*Rhodoness caryophyllacia*) of India, 1944. Ugandan Volunteers should also know that not only wildlife species are endangered. The Environment Liaison Centre based in Nairobi recently revealed that of the 145 indigenous cattle breeds in Europe and the Mediterranean Region, 115 are threatened with extinction; so is the Wensleydale sheep species known for its quality wool. The Cornish hen is also gone, and this was the basis of the production of quick growing chicks for the modern broiler industry. Other animal species which are endangered but not very new in our lands include the Bumlete Bat, or Kitti's hog-nosed bat; the Muriqui or woolly spider Monkey and the Orinoco Crocodile (*crocodylus intermedius*). Among the endangered plant species is the African violet (*saintpaulia ionatha*); Rio palenque Mahogany (*persea theobromifolia*); and Bamboo cycad (*ceratozamia hildae*).

Uganda has problems in the pest control field especially among the horticultural farmers. Most people are still using the pesticides

with very little sense of the correct dosage and even type. The existing laws on the importation of pesticides is not serious enough. It needs strengthening to ensure that those who misbehave suffer some notable penalty. A good number of our farmers still use herbicides and pesticides in a very irrational fashion calling for action to stop things from getting worse. In a common home, it is not unusual for a mother to place the Mobil insecticide tin next to a loaf of Tip Top Bread. Voluntary Organizations should do something about such instances of hazardous displays.

Although our industries are still weak we still suffer from instances of pollution which could be avoided. Up to the present moment many of us wonder whether the City Council has ever employed any environmental consultant in the implementation of its assignments. Judging from the amount of toxic residues involved in the production of soap in Mukwano soap Industry, environmentalists would have been very hesitant in recommending that factory be positioned where it is. It should be much further than the place where it is presently. The gases from that factory are dangerous to man and the Ozone-layer. Mukwano is only one example of Industries which are badly located.

Mutebile's Paper mentioned above addresses itself very well to the protection of settlement places from exposure to dangerous wastes and measures towards the safe disposal of wastes, both solid waste etc. in the National environment Action Plan. All those are mere assumptions. Kampala which is the capital City of the Country is in total decay - nearly every sewerage pipe has some leakage - let the presenter of the said Paper take the trouble to move around in places like Kisenyi, Nakasero, he will experience the exposition of dangerous wastes. Our towns today are facing the problem of the polythene bags which people have inevitably got to use because they have no alternative. The polythene bags are polluting most of our towns and if nothing is done to either get polythene re-cycled or do away with it in preference for disposable materials, then we are in trouble. The polythene bag is dangerous to our soils, human lives and the animals, domestic and wild.

#### WHY NGOs?

Non-government Organizations are generally non-profit making, free and voluntary in nature. They are very useful in Society and without them something will always be lacking. NGOs are supposed to be free

in nature and usually operate well in a democratic environment. Idi Amin had a distaste for them because they used to expose his dictatorial tendencies.

A number of International Conferences World-wide have been held basically to fight global decline in environmental conservation and natural resource depletion. They include the Cairo Plan of Action for African Environmental Ministers, the Tbilisi Youth Environment Conference, the Vancouver Human Settlement Conference etc. All those Conferences had resolutions passed but someone had to follow up what has been promised. With the changing forms of Governments in Africa, NGOs have done a lot to follow up what has been passed by various Governments and Peoples.

The protection and conservation of Nature in Uganda is not a small exercise. It is an assignment which requires concerted action, love, and understanding. Nature Conservation is something which anybody could take up. He needn't be a scientist or an ecologist. Over a decade ago, the National Council of Voluntary Social services sent me on a mission, a voluntary mission to attend a Youth Course on Environmental conservation in Karen, Kenya. I had no knowledge about bio-diversity or the danger facing the Ozone Layer; I was a mere youth-student leader. I got excited about the resolutions of the Course upon my return to Uganda and through friendly contacts, courage and perseverance I thought of establishing a Society close to the one I had seen in Kenya. I still recall the courage which people like Nathaniel Chumo, Robert Poole, MacIvaine, Marteen Bijleveld, Sir David Scott, Prince Bernard of the Netherlands, Eric Edroma, John Bushara, Ponsiano Semwezi gave me at the very beginning of everything.

#### Conclusion:

This paper is being delivered at a time when the World is about to assemble in Brazil to examine among other things reasons and symptoms for Global decline, Environmental degradation and NATURAL RESOURCE depletion as well as Human deprivation, Uganda will certainly be represented. It will also look at the prevailing economic Order as a major factor in causing pollution and waste of natural resources. This form of imbalance has already been realized through Mwalimu 'Nyerere's New South Commission.

As we embark on what should be done to improve the conditions of life for man on Earth, we should not forget that apart from poverty which is

the main source of environmental decline, in the Developing Countries, the AIDS scourge is also becoming a very notable issue. In Uganda over one million people are believed to be victims of this killer disease.

Voluntary Organizations can certainly do something to alert the general public about the dangers facing Nature in this Country. They must however do this in an atmosphere which respects human rights of the individuals to participate in the political administration of their country. During Idi Amin's time you all know the amount of losses which our bio-diversity suffered. It is in fact during Idi Amin's time that we lost our rare species of the White Rhino. Wild life is very sensitive - once there is war in Uganda, it will disappear in the same way it has done so in recent years and in the same way it is disappearing today in North-Eastern Uganda where unrest still reigns.

In the diagrams which are shown on pages 14 and 15 the assessment made indicates that the broader a nature conservation is the better results one might expect. Nature Societies should ensure that they carry out some practical conservation exercises. The Scouts operate a physical animal sanctuary at Kazi and this is designed to demonstrate to the new members what a nature project looks like. Young people take a lot of interest in practical experiences.

In Uganda afforestation could be followed up in a small way through some Agro-forestry projects. I have had occasion to work with rural people in Machakos in Eastern Kenya and what I saw moved me a great deal. The terraces on which women plant trees are quite dry but they are so successful that even the chiefs in the areas concerned are all part of what is going on. Agro-forestry here is very easy to carry out. Trees like *Ficus Natalensis* Mutuba), *Omusizi* (*Meosopsis eminii*) *Olusambya* (*maichhinia platyplax*, *croton megalocarpus*, jack fruit, *Acacia albi*, *grevillea robusta* can grow very well alongside beans, peas, matooke cassava etc. Whenever one tries an exercise of that kind, he is conserving Nature.

The protection of Nature in Uganda therefore demands for a situation which is democratic. It must also be open so that no single man or group is a monopoly of ideas. Nature will not just survive through our endeavours. Its existence will have a lot to do with the laws governing this country. If we want nature to survive, we must create an atmosphere where the sharing of power will be democratized

to avoid monopoly. This therefore will call for the restoration of democracy to create room for all Ugandans to have a say on the utilization and exploitation of the Country's rich natural resources. The voluntary spirit is the answer and it cannot operate in an atmosphere divorced from the fundamental freedoms of man.



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