

# POLITICAL PARTIES, POLITICAL CHANGE AND ENVIRONMENTAL GOVERNANCE IN UGANDA

## A Review of Political Parties Manifestos



Arthur Bainomugisha

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

In a multiparty democracy political parties are expected to one of the key power centers in policy and decision making over the management and utilization of the environment assets. It is envisaged that political parties will have significant influence on the autonomy and authority of the Parliament and individual legislators. As such, the effectiveness of Parliament and individual Members of Parliament to effectively bring a wide range of public policy issues including environmental issues is likely to depend on the policy programs of political parties. In order to ensure that environmental issues are not eclipsed by other civic matters, it is important that they become part and parcel of the campaign agendas of political parties as articulated in their election manifestos. This way, the voters in particular and the citizens in general who are disproportionately affected by the continuing environmental degradation can be able to demand for effective representation and accountability from these institutions based on their electoral promises. This paper therefore provides a detailed review and analysis of the scope of coverage and sensitivity of environmental and natural resources issues as articulated in political party manifestos of political parties which participated in the February 2006 elections.

This paper builds on our earlier research on legislative representation and the environment and the role of Special Interest Groups in the Sixth and Seventh Parliament in representing the environment interests of their constituencies. These studies were made possible by a generous grant from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) through the World Resources Institute (WRI). We are therefore indebted to Jon Anderson of USAID and Peter Veit of WRI for not only supporting our work on legislative representation and the environment but also for providing input into the analytical aspects of the work being undertaken. Our work in this area has benefited from several other research projects including the Integrated Environmental Policy Advocacy and Monitoring Initiative supported by the Department for International Development (DFID), and Community Based Property Rights and the Environment supported by the Ford Foundation. The invaluable contribution of these partners to our research and advocacy agenda is therefore acknowledged.

The author is also grateful to the entire research team at ACODE specifically to Godber W. Tumushabe for the intellectual oversight provided in the course of conducting this study as well as Flugencio Kaiso who is a Research Associate, for his research support.

**LIST OF ACRONYMS**

|       |                                                     |
|-------|-----------------------------------------------------|
| ACODE | Advocates Coalition for Development and Environment |
| CMC   | Common Man's Charter                                |
| CP    | Conservative Party                                  |
| DLB   | District Land Board                                 |
| DP    | Democratic Party                                    |
| FDC   | Forum for Democratic Change                         |
| GDP   | Growth Domestic Product                             |
| HEP   | Hydro Electricity Power                             |
| MPs   | Members of Parliament                               |
| MW    | Mega Watts                                          |
| NEA   | National Environment Act                            |
| NEMA  | National Environmental Management Authority         |
| NFA   | National Forestry Authority                         |
| NRA   | National Resistance Army                            |
| NRM   | National Resistance Movement                        |
| PEAP  | Poverty Eradication Action Plan                     |
| ULC   | Uganda Land Commission                              |
| UPC   | Uganda Peoples Congress                             |
| USAID | United States Agency for International Development  |
| UWA   | Uganda Wildlife Authority                           |
| WID   | Wetlands Inspections Division                       |
| WRI   | World Resources Institute                           |

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

After 20 years of uninterrupted leadership under a no party political system-the 'Movement Government' which restricted the operations of political parties during its political tenure, finally reintroduced a multiparty political system of governance. The first multi-party elections under the 1995 Constitution were held on 23 February 2006. The elections were won by the incumbent President Yoweri Museveni although the results were contested in the Supreme Court by the closest challenger Rt. Col. Dr. Kiiza Besigye the leader of opposition Forum for Democratic Change (FDC). In addition to FDC, two other political parties-the Uganda Peoples Congress (UPC) and the Democratic Party (DP) and one independent candidate contested in the elections. Through their respective manifestos, all political parties put forward their political agendas on how they would tackle and address Uganda's social, political and economic challenges.

The bulk of Ugandan voters estimated by Uganda Bureau of Statistics (UBOS) and the Electoral Commission at about 11 million live in rural areas and are dependent on the environment and natural resources for their livelihood security, monetary income and for the provisioning of critical resources such as water, energy etc. As we demonstrated in our research on legislative representation and the environment, under the Movement political system, the principle of individual merit was emphasized. As such, individual legislators were able to bring to the floor of Parliament environmental issues that affected their electorates in a non-partisan manner. Consequently, it is argued that while environmental issues are likely to be one of the key public policy issue affecting voters in rural and urban areas, under a multiparty system, the ruling party and the opposition parties are likely to be bound by party interests and the principle of corrective responsibility at the expense of the pressing governance issues affecting the country.

Experience in Uganda shows that at major political turning points, environmental issues are always relegated to the bottom line of the political agenda. A good example is the case when the ruling Uganda Peoples Congress (UPC) Government in the early 1980s. When faced with the rebel insurgency in the Luwero triangle, Government slashed the budget support for major supervisory environmental agencies hence making them unable to execute their mandates leading to unprecedented environmental destruction at the time. Like wise, the new political order is likely to be dominated by ruthless competition between the ruling NRM party that is emerging from a long history of political monopoly, and a young, inexperienced, poorly resourced opposition that is struggling to expand its political space and base.

What is most worrying is that the struggle for political power among parties is likely to overshadow environmental governance and other national development issues at a time when Uganda's natural resource base is shrinking at unprecedented levels. The total area of the permanent forest cover that comprised approximately half of the total land area of Uganda at the time of colonization (1894), has today been reduced to 24 percent<sup>1</sup>. Swamps have been drained or converted from their natural state, water bodies have been heavily polluted, and top soils have been eroded, amidst a wide range of other negative environmental phenomena. The effects of environmental degradation are evident. Rivers are drying up, lakes are shrinking, the water table is going down, drought periods have become prolonged and desertification is a reality<sup>2</sup>. The sum total of this negative environmental phenomenon is most pressing on the individual subsistence farmers in the country side who depend on the natural environment for the derivation of their livelihoods.

This paper argues that political parties are going to be the main power blockers in the new political dispensation under a multiparty political system including making important decisions over the management and utilization of the environment and natural resources. The influence of these parties will be felt both in the House and at constituency levels. As such, the effectiveness of Parliament and individual Members of Parliament to represent environment concerns is likely to depend on the policies and programs of political parties. In order to ensure that environmental issues are not eclipsed by other issues, it is important that they become part and parcel of political agendas of political parties. This way, the citizens would be able to monitor political parties and Government policies and practices hold them accountable based on their commitments to good stewardship of the environment as may be articulated in their respective political manifestos.

Beyond the review of political party manifestos in respect to environmental governance agendas, the study focused on the critical importance of the environment and natural resources to Uganda's economy as well as the role of political parties in a democracy. The rationale for this was to try to shift the focus of political parties away from mere capture of political power to being partners in government by presenting a formidable issue based political opposition and alternative policy proposals.

The findings indicate that all the manifestos political parties that were reviewed provided for environmental protection and sustainable development. It is worth noting that some political party manifestos were more detailed

1 Onesmus Mugenyi, Bashir Twesigye & Edwin Muhereza, "Balancing Nature Conservation and Livelihoods: A Legal Analysis of the Forestry Evictions by the National Forestry Authority, ACODE Policy Briefing Paper No. 13, 2005.

2 See, Vincent Nalwendela, "Water Stress", The Weekly Observer March 30- April 5, 2006, p. 7.



than others. Based on the review, the following recommendations are put forward to provided a frame work for better articulation of environmental and natural resources governance issues by political parties.

- **All Political Parties should be committed to protect the integrity of the Environment and Natural Resources**

There is compelling evidence both in the literature as well as in this paper that majority of Ugandans depend on environmental assets for their sustenance and survival. For instance, the Housing and Population Census report on Uganda of 2000, established that the agricultural sector alone contributes 42% of the total GDP; and accounts for 85% of the export earnings and provides approximately 80% of employment. It is further noted that Majority of Ugandans estimated at 88% who live in rural areas depend on the environment and natural resources for their livelihoods. In spite of the vast natural resource endowment, Uganda's natural capital has been on the decline driven largely by poor and inappropriate policies, demographic factors and poor farming practices by communities which are governance issues.

Consequently environmental degradation is leading to climate change resulting into food shortages and increased pressure on land, water and pasture in most parts of the country. Ultimately this is becoming a major fault line for what most people characterize ethnic based conflicts in Uganda. Unless, practical steps are undertaken to reverse the trends, Uganda is likely to suffer intractable natural resource based conflicts that could reverse the economic gains recorded since 1986. On the basis of the above picture, any political party that does not have a concrete, and elaborate environmental governance is not committed to building a prosperous Uganda and should not be entrusted with political power.

- **Political Parties must be held accountable for their manifesto promises at all times**

As we have seen in the past some political parties have made promises to protect and conserve the environment during the election campaigns and once in Government simply abandon such promises as was the case of the Uganda Peoples Congress in the first half of the 1980. However, the consequences of un fulfilled promises have been gross mismanagement and degradation of our natural resources and environment. Already Environmental security analysts point out that unless Uganda acts now to reverse the environmental degradation trends, the current development is not sustainable and the current generation will be bequeathing an ecological debt to the future generations. The NRM has made several promises in its manifesto regarding environmental governance, it would be important to have a balance sheet between its promises and practice as it steers the country in the next five years (2006-2011).

- **The Political Parties and Organizations Act should be amended to provide for a timeframe within which Political Parties must publish their manifestos for public scrutiny**

Experience from the last concluded presidential and parliamentary elections shows that most political parties did not produce their manifestos on time for several reasons including financial, technical and strategic reasons. Some of them reasoned that their ideas would be pirated if they came out first and waited to produce political manifestos at the last minute. On the other hand some lacked expertise in several areas and as such came out with promises that were not well researched and grounded in analysis. The delay by political parties to come out with manifestos greatly disadvantages the electorate who need time to choose a better political program/ package from an array of promises by several parties. In future, parties' fitness and political correctness to govern should be pegged on their ability to come out within the set time frame.

- **The opposition political parties should champion the environmental governance agenda**

The political opposition parties should champion the environmental governance agenda to compel Government to implement its manifesto promises. The review of political party manifestos revealed that the major four parties promised to promote sound environmental management. In a functioning democracy the opposition are partners in government in a sense that they continue to provide checks and balances to the incumbent Government by continuously selling their political agenda and alternative policies to the electorate with a hope of being elected in future by the electorate. As we have seen, the incumbent NRM party always comes up with good promises for environmental management which in most cases are never implemented based on political calculations. The opposition needs to continuously remain engaged to make sure that the NRM implements its campaign promises regarding responsible stewardship of the environment.

- **Political Parties must undertake to protect and promote environmental rights**

Listening to most leaders of political parties especially in the opposition, their main political agenda seems that of promotion of civil and political rights and equitable distribution of development. Apparently, most parties do not realize that the environment is a very critical sector in the realization of the above rights. Most importantly, both Government and oppositions' failure to realize that environmental rights are human rights and therefore the enjoyment of human rights cannot be complete

without environmental rights. Time has come for all the political actors, civil society and academia to start promoting the realization of human rights in a holistic manner. Political parties that espouse to be defenders and promoters of human rights should stand up and be counted as promoters of environmental rights as human rights.

- **Political Parties need to expose their leaders to environmental issues in order for them to champion environmental governance**  
Since it is apparent that Uganda is a natural resource dependent country, it is imperative that people who aspire for political power are sufficiently exposed to this reality. During the time of conducting this research, it was discovered that most leaders of political parties were sympathetic to environmental governance but were not conversant with environmental issues. Because of this reality, it is recommended that political parties should as a matter of priority organize environmental awareness trainings to expose party leaders to environmental issues. This way, party leaders and contending legislators will be able to appreciate that other than promising schools, clinics, bridges and other forms of development which should ordinarily be the responsibility of Government, undertaking to promote the integrity of the environment and natural resources base is the most important way of providing for the electorate especially in Uganda's rural constituency.

If poverty and environmental problems persist, it is in large part because poor people and environmental concerns remain marginalized by – and from sources of power. Poor people are unable to access resources, services and political processes; in effect, they are excluded from the institutions and benefits of wider society. Public environmental goods are appropriated to serve the interests of more powerful private individuals and companies, who keep environmental interest groups on the political margins.....what we perceive as ‘mans’ power over nature turns out, invariably, to be the power of some people over others, with nature as its instrument<sup>3</sup>

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The recently concluded Presidential and Parliamentary multiparty elections which took place on 23 February 2006 were a major political land mark in Uganda. After 20 years of uninterrupted leadership under a no-party political system- the Movement Political System which restricted the operations of political parties, Uganda finally reintroduced political pluralism. The elections were won by the incumbent President Yoweri Museveni although the results were contested in the Supreme Court by the closest challenger Rt. Col. Dr. Kiiza Besigye the leader of opposition Forum for Democratic Change (FDC). Besigye who was seeking the nullification of electoral results claimed that the elections were massively rigged and were characterized by violence against his supporters. Consequently, the Supreme Court ruled in favor of President Museveni and his ruling National Resistance Movement (NRM). President Museveni has been in power for the last 20 years since 1986 when the rebel National Resistance Army (NRA) toppled the military junta.

While the return to political pluralism represents a fundamental step in Uganda’s democratization process, it also presents new challenges of governance and sustainable development. One of the likely challenges in the new political dispensation is the possibility that the environmental issues and interests of the majority rural natural dependent poor communities may be sidelined under the multiparty politics.

Under the Movement political system, the principle of individual merit was emphasized which enabled individual legislators bring to the floor of Parliament environmental concerns that affected their electorate in a non-partisan manner<sup>4</sup>. Conversely, under the multiparty system, political parties

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3 Stephen Bass, Hannah Reid, David Satterthwaite and Paul Steel, “Reducing Poverty and Sustaining the Environment: The Politics of Local Engagement”, Earthscan Publications Ltd, London, 2005, p.1.

4 Godber W. Tumushabe & Arthur Bainomugisha, “Constitutional Reform and Environmental Legislative Representation in Uganda: A Case Study of Butamiri Forest Reserve in Uganda, ACODE

and Government are likely to be bound so much by party interests and the principle of collective responsibility at the expense of the environmental and other civic issues affecting their constituencies. Experience in Uganda shows that at major political turning points environmental issues are always relegated to the bottom line of the political agenda.

What is also worrying is that politics in Uganda is increasingly overshadowing environmental governance and other development issues at a time when the country's natural resource base, which was previously rich and diverse, is shrinking at unprecedented levels. The total area of the permanent forest cover that comprised approximately half of the total land area of Uganda at the time of colonization (1894), has today been reduced to 24 percent<sup>5</sup>. Swamps have been drained or converted from their natural state, water bodies have been heavily polluted, and top soils have been eroded, amidst a wide range of other negative environmental phenomena. The effects of environmental degradation are evident. Rivers are drying out, lakes are shrinking, the water table is going down, droughts have become prolonged and desertification is a reality<sup>6</sup>. The sum total of this negative environmental phenomenon is most pressing on the individual subsistence farmers in the country side who depend on the natural environment for the derivation of their livelihoods.

The paper contends that in the new political dispensation under a multiparty political system, political parties are going to be the main power centers in policy and decision making over the management and utilization of the environment and natural resources. The paper further argues that political parties will have significant influence on the autonomy and authority of the Parliament and individual legislators. As such, the effectiveness of Parliament and individual Members of Parliament to represent environmental interests of their electorates is likely to depend on the policies and programs of political parties. In order to ensure that environmental issues are not eclipsed by other interests, it is important that they become part and parcel of political parties' agenda. This way, the citizens would be able to monitor political parties and Government policies and practices and to hold them accountable based on their manifestos.

The paper is divided into four sections. The first section is the background which discusses the relevancy of the environment and natural resources to Uganda's economy and their centrality in ensuring sustainable livelihoods

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Policy Research Series, No 10, 2004. The authors of this research demonstrate how a Member of Parliament for Kagoma, Hon. Frank Nabwiso, Jinja district was able to bring the environmental issues of his Constituency on the floor of Parliament.

5 Government of Uganda, 2001, National Forestry Policy, at p.2

6 See, Vincent Nalwendela, "Water Stress", The Weekly Observer March 30- April 5, 2006, p. 7.

of majority natural resource dependent communities. The second section focuses on the functions of political parties in a democracy while the third section is a review of individual political party manifestos' agenda on the environment. The fourth section and last section is the recommendations and a conclusion.

## **2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

This study was largely based on quantitative methods of secondary data collection and analysis. The bulk of work was undertaken through literature review and interviews. The literature review entailed a detailed review of the campaign manifestos of political parties that participated in the February 2006 presidential elections. These were largely the campaign manifestos of Uganda Peoples Congress (UPC), the National Resistance Movement (NRM), the Forum for Democratic Change (FDC) and the Democratic Party (DP). While the study had been planned to provide the electorate with the information and analysis regarding the environmental agendas of political parties, the delay by the parties to produce and publish the manifestos constituted a major impediment to the overall research objective.

In addition to the literature review, semi-structured interviews were conducted. Key respondents included mainly the leaders of political parties, leading academics and civil society practitioners. The other category of people interviewed were the Members of Parliament (MPs) especially those who were members of the Environment and Natural Resources Committee and some selected opinion leaders from the general public.

## **3. THE RELEVANCE OF GOOD ENVIRONMENTAL GOVERNANCE TO UGANDA AND WHY POLITICAL PARTIES MUST BE CONCERNED**

### **3.1. The Environment drives the economy and sustains the rural poor voters**

In Uganda, like many African countries, the environment and natural resources are the cornerstone for economic growth and development. The environment forms the basis for agricultural development, industrial development, tourism development, infrastructural development as well as being a source of scientific research and progress.

According to the Housing and Population Census report of 2000, the agricultural sector alone contributes 42% of the total GDP; and accounts for 85% of the export earnings, provided approximately 80% of employment. A recent study by the Uganda National NGO Forum revealed that 74% of Ugandans currently depend on subsistence agriculture for their livelihood and their standard of

living remains at the lowest level in the world<sup>7</sup>. Part of the explanation for a down trend in poverty levels has something to do with poor environmental management.

Many communities and individuals derive their livelihoods and welfare from natural resource assets. Natural resources are the basis for household food security, they constitute a major source of energy, and construction materials, and form the foundation for many income generating business activities. Although, the 1995 constitution returned power to the people, decisions over the management of natural resources practically remained a preserve of the national government. Thus, most decisions over management of the natural resources have been and continue to be taken at highest levels of government: in the national legislative body and the executive level of government. It is therefore evident that most rural communities who are mostly affected by such decisions lack opportunity and capacity to participate meaningfully in any decision- or policy-making processes. In such circumstances, since the legislature comprises of representatives from these communities, it is the most appropriate highest level of decision-making where the environmental interests of natural resources dependent communities can be protected.

Because majority of Ugandans are dependent on natural resources, most human rights abuses and violent conflicts revolve around the struggle to access and control of various natural resources. The current political problems in Kibale district between the indigenous Banyoro and the immigrant Bakiiga, the quest for a federal status for Buganda region presented as political issues are known to be driven and fuelled by the struggle to access and control land resources.<sup>8</sup> In such circumstances, political parties in Parliament are best placed to act as a conflict management and conflict prevention mechanism in



*A Munyankore herdsman being beaten in Teso for grazing in a wetland and for trespassing.*

Source: New Vision Library

7 See, Uganda National NGO Forum Report, "Civil Society perspective on the progress and challenges of attaining the Millennium Development Goals in Uganda", May 2005.

8 See, Lorna Juliet Amutojo and Jeff Atwine, "Compulsory Land Acquisition in Uganda: Case studies of Lake Mburo National Park, AES Nile Power- Bujagali Hydro Electricity Power Project and Kibaale District Absentee Landlords". A Policy Research Report (forthcoming), 2006.

natural resource based conflicts. Parliament using the various mechanisms and resources at its disposal can promote environmental rights especially of vulnerable resource dependent communities. These rights may range from access to land, access to protected areas, access to clean water and access to key economic resources such as forest concessions and wildlife concessions to revenue sharing and minority rights protection.

Consequently, it becomes pertinent to influence political party agendas and political leaders to understand the challenges of environmental governance and for them to spearhead sustainable development and environmental justice for the resource dependent communities.

What is more pressing now is that environmental management in Uganda is increasingly becoming politicized which partly explains why there has been widespread environmental degradation. For example, during the recently concluded Presidential and Parliamentary elections, most politicians were faced with severe economic demands by the poor electorate and were forced to make promises that if granted would have serious negative consequences on the environment. In the course of campaigns, President Museveni directed environmental bodies to stop evictions of encroachers from forests and wetlands. The President issued this directive ahead of his campaign in Busoga region, which is experiencing serious cases of forest encroachment in the country<sup>9</sup>. It is noted that the president's advisors and the National Resistance Movement (his party), mobilizers advised that he would be unpopular if environmental bodies were not restrained from evicting forest encroachers on the protected forest estate.

Such a scenario confirms fears of potential environmental degradation under the multiparty system which calls for immediate mitigation measures to prevent the situation from getting out of hand. Ultimately the greening of political party manifestos is envisaged as a best safe guard against neglect of environmental issues in the new political dispensation which is likely to be politically charged as political actors grapple to understand how political pluralism works in a democracy.

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9 Gerald Tenywa, "Museveni annoys environmentalists", The New Vision, Saturday, January 21 2006, p.4.



### 3.2. The cost of environmental degradation affects the poor rural voters disproportionately

In 1991, the annual cost of environmental degradation in Uganda was conservatively estimated to be between US dollars 170 million and US dollars 457 million, accounting for between 4 percent and 8 percent of Gross National Product (GNP)<sup>10</sup>. By 2001, the total environmental loss was estimated to have increased to a range of between US dollars 1.3 billion and US dollars 3.8 billion<sup>11</sup>.

More recent estimates of the cost of natural resource degradation in Uganda indicate that it is as high as 17 % of Gross National Income per year, of which 6% represents forest degradation and 11% represents soil degradation<sup>12</sup>.



Figure 1 Destruction of forests and wetlands as catchments is drying up rivers

At the sub-sector level, Environment and Natural Resources degradation manifests itself in a number of ways. These are; encroachment on conservation areas, soil erosion and soil deterioration, rangeland degradation, over fishing, water and soil pollution, to mention but a few. Unless this rate of environmental degradation is controlled or reversed, it could significantly jeopardize the country's development goals and objectives. Most importantly the natural resource dependent rural communities would be the most affected. Consequently, the need for a responsible political regime: both the opposition and the ruling National Resistance Movement committed in ensuring prudent environmental governance becomes very critical and urgent for Uganda.

### 3.3. Environment and Natural Resources Security Nexus

Several studies have shown that there is a relationship between conflict and environmental degradation and scarcity. The World Commission on Environment and Development confirms this point and observes that,

10 ibid; Moyini, at p. 48

11 ibid

12 Ministry of Finance, 2004, Poverty Eradication Action Plan, at p. 73

..nations have often fought to assert or resist control over raw materials, energy supplies, land, river basins, ....and other key environmental resources. The Commission notes that such conflicts are likely to increase as these resources become scarcer and competition for them increases.<sup>13</sup>

The environment- security paradigm was also re-echoed by the former UN Secretary General Boutros-Ghali's Agenda for Peace where he identified ecological damage as a new risk for stability<sup>14</sup>.

The growing population and pressure on land and other natural resources, and gross mismanagement of natural resources and the environment in Uganda is leading to environmental stress and scarcity. Environmental scarcity is trapping the country especially rural communities in a cut throat struggle and competition over scarce resources leading to violent conflicts. The current political problems in Kibale district between the indigenous Banyoro and the immigrant Bakiiga communities, the issue of Bahima herdsmen being expelled from Apac district grazing lands<sup>15</sup> is driven and fuelled by the struggle to access and control land resources.<sup>16</sup> Because of the potential security threat, that environmental degradation poses to Uganda and other resource dependent countries, improved management of natural resources in a sustainable manner needs to be brought to the centre stage of politics. Consequently, in a multiparty political system, political parties become the best placed political actors to champion prudent environmental governance as a mechanism to mitigate against natural resource induced conflicts and their attendant costs.

The 8<sup>th</sup> Parliament of Uganda will essentially be partisan with the ruling National Resistance Movement (NRM) being the majority party in Parliament with 202 MPs followed by Forum for Democratic Change with 37 MPs as the leading opposition party<sup>17</sup>. This partisan Parliament is expected to be a major mechanism where socio-economic, political and livelihood issues will be negotiated and resolved. Because, Uganda's economy is natural resource

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13 See, Lorraine Elliott, "The Global Politics of the Environment", Macmillan Press Ltd, London, 1998, p.220.

14 Ibid.

15 See, Patrick Okino, "Bahima stuck in Lango", The New Vision, Wednesday, July 5, 2006.

16 See, Lorna Juliet Amutojo and Jeff Atwine, " Compulsory Land Acquisition in Uganda: Case studies of Lake Mburo National Park, AES Nile Power- Bujagali Hydro Electricity Power Project and Kibaale District Absentee Landlords". A Policy Research Report (forthcoming), 2006.

17 Ssemujju Ibrahim Nganda and James Tumusiime, "Peeping into the 8th Parliament", The Weekly Observer May 4-10, 2006, p. 4.

dependent, environment and natural resources protection are central to the country's development. Consequently, in spite of the 8<sup>th</sup> Parliaments' partisan nature and considering the critical importance of natural resources, there is a need for convergence of interests among political parties when handling environmental issues. In other words, for Uganda to achieve sustainable development, environmental issues should be handled in a bi-partisan manner.

Clair Ireland and Godber Tumushabe have observed that sound environmental management can be used as a tool to promote good governance. They argue that,

Natural resources are the 'bread and butter' for the poor in East Africa. The impact of poor governance can often be visibly seen by the degradation it can cause to the resource and by the impact it can have on people's livelihood strategies. Environmental management can be used to tangibly demonstrate good governance, which means it is also a compelling vehicle for promoting and consolidating key good governance principles of participation, vertical and horizontal accountability, and representation<sup>18</sup>.

Improved environmental governance of natural resources is going to be a key determinant in achieving poverty reduction, sustainable development and ensuring peace and stability in Uganda. As ACODE has argued elsewhere, that political parties must understand the nexus between good governance and sound management of the environment and natural resources if they are going to be key forces to champion sustainable livelihoods and development in Uganda. Above all, by the political parties championing good environmental stewardship, they will be doing their civic and constitutional duties provided for in the Constitution and National Environment Management Authority Act 1995. Article 39 provides that, "Every Ugandan has a right to a clean and healthy environment". Section 4 (2) of the National Environment Act states that, "Every person has a duty to maintain and enhance the environment, including the duty to inform the Authority or local environment committees of all activities and phenomena that may affect the environment significantly. Section 4 (3) further provides that, "In furtherance of the right to a clean and healthy environment and enforcement of the duty to maintain and enhance the environment, the authority or the local environment committee so informed under subsection (2) is entitled to bring an action against any other person whose activities or omissions have or are likely to have a significant impact on the environment..."

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18 See, Claire Ireland and Godber Tumushabe, "The Evolving Roles of Environmental Management Institutions in East Africa: From Conservation to Poverty Reduction", in, Stephen Bass, Hannah Reid, David Satterthwaite and Paul Steele, *Reducing Poverty and Sustaining the Environment: The Politics of Local Engagement*, Earthscan Publications Ltd, London, 2005, p.101.

As some analysts have pointed out, the more citizens are able to know about the environment, to express their opinions and to hold their leaders accountable for their performance. Also, the level of citizens' awareness about the environment, the more they are likely to prevent gross environmental mismanagement<sup>19</sup>. Ultimately, environmental conservation and sustainability reduces the potential for resources scarcity induced conflicts and creates



*Is Lake Victoria drying up too?. An official from National Environmental Management Authority (NEMA) showing the declining levels of water in Lake Victoria. Uganda was recently plunged into an energy crisis due to prolonged drought and reduced water in R. Nile.*

*Source: New Vision Library*

conditions for sustainable peace and security. Critical in the building civic consciousness of citizens about the environmental rights and other civic rights are the political parties.

The section that follows below discusses the roles, responsibilities of political parties in a democracy and how parties could help promote equity and promote livelihoods of poor resource dependent communities.

#### **4. CONCEPTUALIZING THE FUNCTIONS OF POLITICAL PARTIES IN A DEMOCRACY AND UGANDA'S EXPERIENCE**

While political parties are a core institution within a democracy, it is the one institution that has received very little attention in the discourse about democracy. In the context of Uganda, political party practice is young and underdeveloped. In order to demonstrate how underdeveloped, young and fragile political parties in Uganda are, it would be imperative to give a brief political history of political parties.

The origins of political parties may be traced from the ancient Greek City States. Some trace them as early as ancient Athens, when different groups sought to actively influence debates and decisions in the large popular assembly, based on a variety of familiar criteria: social status, loyalty, occupation, favorite leaders. Others see the origin of political parties in eightieth-century Britain when the organization of parliamentary support and attempts to influence the outcome of elections became questions of vital concern for powers that were; when Bolingbroke provided the first articulate

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<sup>19</sup> World Resources 2002-2004: Decisions for the Earth, Balance, Voice and Power, World Resources Institute, Washinton, D.C. 2003, p.29.

defense of institutionalized opposition<sup>20</sup> Parties are essential to competitive democracy to raise funds, select candidates, and articulate opposing policy views and provide checks and balances to the ruling parties.

Uganda gained its independence from the British colonial rule in 1962. The Uganda Peoples Congress drew its support from the Anglican Protestant followers in the country. Its main rival-the Democratic Party (DP) was predominantly supported by the Catholic followers and indeed it was formed to advance the interests of Catholics perceived as a politically marginalized majority group in the country at the time. Other political parties included the Conservative Party (CP) and Kabaka Yekka (KY) which was presented as a pressure group espousing the interests of the king of Buganda Kingdom.

The political engineering, manipulation and intrigue that characterized the independence government resulted into the 1966 Constitutional crisis between the Prime Minister Milton Obote who was the executive head of government and President Kabaka Mutesa who was also king of Buganda Kingdom<sup>21</sup>. Consequently, Obote deposed the President who fled the country, abrogated the 1962 independence federal Constitution, abolished kingdoms in Uganda and introduced the Republic Constitution in 1967. This marked the beginning of an era of political intolerance of other political parties and opinions. Earlier on in 1964, with problems in the DP and political inducements, the ruling UPC had succeeded in convincing the leader of opposition in Parliament Bazil Bataringaya to cross to its side together with five members of DP.

Bataringaya was subsequently appointed a Minister for Internal Affairs in the UPC government. This party desertion was followed by other MPs from CP which in effect left UPC unchallenged in Parliament. In 1969 Obote declared Uganda a one party state under UPC. These political developments resulted into a military coup led by the army commander Idi Amin in 1971. Amin instituted a reign of terror in Uganda that resulted into close to half million people losing their lives. In 1979 a combined force of Tanzanian army and Ugandan refugees overthrew Idi Amin. In 1980 general elections were held which are largely believed to have been rigged by the Military Commission in favor of UPC government leading to the establishment of the second Obote regime. Contesting the electoral outcome, Yoweri Museveni, Uganda's current leader declared a rebellion against the UPC government which lasted for five years and culminated into his capture of political power in January 1986.

When the National Resistance Movement (NRM) captured power in 1986,

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20 Hans Daalder, "The Rise of Parties in Western Democracies", in, Larry Diamond and Richard Gunther (eds.), *Political Parties and Democracy*, The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001, p. 40.

21 G.W. Kanyeihamba, "Constitutional and Political History of Uganda: From 1894 to the Present", Centenary Publishing House Ltd, Kampala, June, p.88.

Government suspended political party activities in Uganda. Although political parties were not banned, the NRM slapped restrictions on most political party activities including holding of political rallies, delegates conferences, member recruitment and establishment of country-wide branch offices. The Government which accused political parties of causing political woes that afflicted Uganda since independence in 1962, justified the suspension of party activities in the name of national unity, reconciliation, stability and reconstruction<sup>22</sup>. Government further legalized political party restrictions in the 1995 Constitution. While article 71 guarantees the right to form a political party or organization, article 73 restricts their operations. Article 37 (1) provides that, "Subject to the provisions of this Constitution, but not withstanding the provisions of paragraph (e) of clause (1) of article 29 and article 43 of this Constitution, during the period when any of the political systems provided for in this Constitution has been adopted, organizations subscribing to other political systems may exist subject to such regulations as Parliament shall by law prescribe.

Interestingly, the 1995 Constitution also provides for the right to form and to belong to any political party or political organization. Article 72 (1) provides that, "Subject to the provisions of this Constitution, the right to form political parties and any other political organization is guaranteed.

Mindful of the country's past political anarchy under a multiparty system, the framers of the 1995 Constitution went a step further to prescribe the principles of democracy which new and old political parties ought to follow in the event of a return to a multiparty system. Article 71 provides for the principles that political parties shall conform to. These include (a) every political party shall have a national character, (b) every political party shall not be based on sex, ethnicity, religion, or other sectional division (c) the internal organization of a political party shall conform to the democratic principles enshrined in this Constitution and, (d) members of the national organs of the party shall be regularly elected from the citizens of Uganda in conformity with the provisions of paragraphs (a) and (b) of this article and with consideration for gender etc. After two decades of a no-party system, Ugandans voted in the 2005 referendum to return to political pluralism.

The challenge for the new political dispensation:-multiparty system is that most Ugandans would like to be assured that it will lead into improved delivery of goods and services and sustainable development. While political pluralism per se does not translate into peace, stability and development, political parties in a functioning democracy are expected to play important governance functions including oversight over the ruling party providing

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22 See, "Democracy and Governance Assessment: Republic of Uganda, 2005. A publication produced for Review by the United States Agency for International Development by ARD, Inc. 2005, p. 5.

alternative policy options and other functions some of which are discussed in the subsequent sections.

The roles and functions of political parties are captured in a definition by Dearlove and Saunders who define a political party as: “a voluntary organization that aggregates interests and competes in elections in order to win governmental power so that it can hence make public policies and direct the larger state machine.”<sup>23</sup> Unlike interest or pressure groups, which seek to influence government policies, programmes or decisions, a political party aspires to take over political power.

Although political parties vary enormously in structure and type of influence, political parties are the main ingredients of all political systems that claim to be democratic. In a democratic society political parties perform the following functions:

#### **4.1. Protection of individual freedoms**

Several scholars of party politics point out that in order to preserve and protect individual rights and freedoms, a democratic people must work together to shape the government of their choice. To attain this however, the principal way of doing it is through political parties. In order to preserve and protect individual freedoms collectively, people mostly elites form political parties that allow them a platform and space to organize and capture political power through free and fair elections.

#### **4.2. Articulating and aggregating the interests of society**

It should also be noted that political parties aggregate interests among the electorate into policies and engage into public debate about these policies with the aim of gaining support for them. Democratic systems vary in the extent to and the means by which they separate interests of individual groups into broader, if not more universalistic appeals. In a presidential system such as in the United States, parties perform the interest aggregation function during the electoral process, either during the party conventions or as appeals made to different groups in the course of the campaigns. In parliamentary systems, the aggregation process occurs during and after the election, when a governing coalition is negotiated and formed. Success in the performance of this interest-aggregation process has important implications for the coherence of public policy and for policy stability over the long term.

#### **4.3. Social Integration function**

Political parties perform a function of social integration by enabling citizens to participate effectively in the political processes of their country. Nationalistic parties unite citizens around interests and needs such as protection of their

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23 Dearlove, J. and P. Saunders, “ Introduction to British Politics”, Polity Press, London, 2000.

environmental rights and ultimately promote nation building and political stability.

While political parties can be credited for struggling for independence in Uganda, almost all independence political parties were formed to promote narrow and parochial interests that revolved mostly around religion, ethnic nationalism and regionalism. Ultimately, instead of offering Ugandans an opportunity to choose their leaders and development policies from a wide range of choices, these parties divided people and the country leading to political violence and anarchy that has characterized Uganda's 44 years of independence. As the country returns to a multiparty democracy it is important for the country to invest in nurturing the growth of nationalistic and royal political parties that seek to serve citizens equally irrespective of gender, tribe, race, religion or color.

#### **4.4. Political Party Manifestos and the Environment**

The rebirth of a multi-party political dispensation in Uganda itself poses a fundamental challenge but at the same time provides opportunities that come with a well functioning democracy. The fundamental challenges mainly relate to the functioning of a multiparty parliament as an institution as well as individual legislators. There are already lingering questions as to the manner in which legislators representing different political parties will conduct themselves over the broad spectrum of the roles that members of Parliament are expected to perform- legislation, representation and oversight. For the purpose of this study, we are interested in how parliament executes its functions in respect to protection and preservation of the environment and promotion of sustainable livelihoods in a partisan dispensation.

The subsequent section below is a review of the four main political parties' manifestos sensitivity to the environment and natural resource governance. The main tools of analysis for political party's environmental sensitivity used are the political manifestos. However for those political parties such as NRM and UPC that have ruled Uganda before, the assessment goes beyond party manifestos to look at how they practically managed the environment during their rule.

### **5. THE NATIONAL RESISTANCE MOVEMENT (NRM) PARTY AND THE ENVIRONMENT**

The National Resistance Movement (NRM) party is an offshoot of the guerrilla National Resistance Movement, which has ruled Uganda uninterrupted since 1986 when it captured political power. The assessment of the environmental compliance of the NRM party takes into account the fact that it is a continuation of the National Resistance Movement which captured political



power from the military junta led by Gen. Tito Okello Lutwa in 1986. Under the Movement Political System, Government was able to put into place the National Environment Act 1995, the National Environmental Authority (NEMA), the National Forestry Authority (NFA), Uganda Wild Life Authority, National Environmental Policy in 1994, National Policy for the Conservation and Management of Wetlands 1995<sup>24</sup> among other environmental institutions and policies which other wise would serve to demonstrate its commitment to good environmental stewardship. Both the 2001 and 2006 President Museveni's Manifestos are very elaborate on environmental governance. In the 2001 Elections Manifesto, President Museveni declared that,

In my 1996 election manifesto, I promised that through the National Environment Management Authority (NEMA), government would protect the environment by carrying out assessments of industrial projects, protected wetlands and forests<sup>25</sup>.

In 2006 presidential elections, NRM election manifesto further promises to promote environmental protection and enumerates the previous achievements under the Movement political system. The Manifesto stated that,

The NRM government is fully committed to the national aspiration regarding environment. The focus will be placed on environmental conservation, regeneration and sustainability<sup>26</sup>.

The NRM manifesto outlined its previous achievements realized in regard to environmental protection and conservation as follows:

Ecosystems management action plans at district, sub-county and community levels that have been developed in the districts of Mbarara, Bushenyi, Kapchorwa, Nebbi, Yumbe, Arua, Moyo and Adjumani. The Manifesto observes that so far fourteen districts have completed development of District Action Plans and at the moment there are rigorous campaigns of monitoring compliance and enforcement of wetland regulations.

In the event of being re-elected for five years (2006-2011), the NRM Manifesto 2006 promised to accomplish the following future programmes;

- ❖ Pursue of policies to ensure a clean and safe environment;
- ❖ NRM government will enforce deliberate policy to effect afforestation

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24 Godber W. Tumushabe & Arthur Bainomugisha et, al. " Consolidating Environmental Democracy in Uganda through Access to Justice, Information and Participation", ACODE Policy Research Series, No 5, 2002, p.38.

25 See, Yoweri Kaguta Museveni, "Consolidating the Achievements of the Movement" 2002 Election Manifesto, p. 70.

26 See, "Prosperity for All" NRM Manifesto 2006", p. 53.

on all bare hills in the country in a bid to protect our environment. Schools should also, as a matter of policy, engage in tree planting to protect the environment and supplement their fuel needs. School children should be participants in tree planting;

- ❖ The evictions from forest reserves, however, shall be suspended until the review of the whole policy on forest reserves has been completed. What were these forests for? Were they for ecological resources or only as a source of wood and timber? Where a forest reserve is for ecological resources, it must be upheld. If it was, on the other hand, merely for wood and timber, there is more flexibility; and
- ❖ The other imperative is bio-diversity. It is a must to protect those plants, mainly, for medicinal resources.

A critical analysis of the NRM's promises in the manifesto and the actual practice in the past, shows that there has not been a serious commitment on its part to protect and exploit the environment in a sustainable manner. Further, it is evident that Government fails to balance between private investment and environmental protection. As subsequent cases will demonstrate; whenever Government has been faced with a decision to allocate land to a prospective private investor and conservation of the environment the latter always takes precedence. Consequently, Government has played lip service to the environmental and natural resources sector by favoring economic growth at the expense of sustainable development. Several cases can be cited to substantiate government anti-environmental policies and decisions in the past and in the recent times.

### 5.1. Case 1: Encroachment on South Busoga Forest Reserve

South Busoga Forest Reserve is located in Mayuge District on the northern shore of Lake Victoria. It measures 16,382 ha and is largely a low lying forest with an extensive shore fringe of papyrus swamp and scattered rock out crops. The reserve has fairly diverse small mammals and large moths, un common tree and shrub species not only in Uganda but also in Eastern Africa. It has an average number of bird and butterfly species. South Busoga Forest Reserve Biodiversity report attributes the reserve's loss of biodiversity to human settlement encroachment on the reserve in the 1970's and 1980's<sup>27</sup>. Alarmed by the level of encroachment on Uganda's Forest Reserves and protected areas in general, Government in 1990 appointed an inter-ministerial committee to examine the matter and come up with recommendations. Based on its findings, the committee recommended that all the encroachers should vacate the forest reserves.

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27 See, Onesmus Mugenyi, Bashir Twesigye & Edwin Muhereza, "Balancing Nature, Conservation and Livelihoods: An Analysis of the Forestry Evictions by National Forestry Authority". ACODE Policy Briefing Paper No. 13, 2005, p. 14.

In early 2005, the National Forest Authority (NFA) embarked on nation wide strategy of evictions. These evictions in South Busoga Forest Reserve and else where in the country have been met with a lot of difficulty arising from political incitement by local politicians who have made political capital out of it While NFA is blamed for inadequate sensitization by the affected communities, politics and politicization of forest evictions have frustrated the institution mandated to protect and direct the utilization of forest reserves. This has prompted several policy analysts to conclude Government is not committed to promoting environmental protection whenever its decisions and actions clash with the interests of potential voters. For example Onesmus Mugenyi et, al. have observed that,



*The photo shows the extent of deforestation of South Busoga Forest Reserve. At this rate of forestry encroachment S. Busoga Forest Reserve will soon extinct!  
Source: New Vision Library*

One of the underlying challenges facing government agencies in the implementation of the law and policy is politics. National and Local politics have largely undermined the institutional mandate of NFA causing massive encroachment of Forestry Reserves. It is therefore important to divorce conservation from politics. In 1996, the President .....while addressing a public rally ....South Busoga Forest Reserve, promised to curve off the settled land from the reserve. He instructed Hon. Henry Kyemba....to implement the promise. When the then Vice President Specioza Kazibwe visited the area....she encouraged all the former evictees to resettle in their plots. In May 2005 when evictions commenced again the President intervened and halted forestry evictions<sup>28</sup>

During the 2006 presidential campaigns as the President prepared to visit Busoga region where South Busoga forest reserve is located, he issued a directive stopping forest evictions which most analysts interpreted as a political calculation to tap into voters support. In an article entitled Museveni annoys environmentalists Gerald Tenywa wrote,

“President Yoweri Museveni’s directive to environmental bodies

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., p. 31.

to stop eviction of encroachers from forests and wetlands has annoyed environmental activists. Museveni issued the directive ahead of campaigns in Busoga, which has heavily encroached South Busoga Forest Reserve, MUYUGU district".<sup>29</sup>

Further review of the NRM manifesto regarding the issue of encroachers, indicate that the party decided to take a soft stance on forest encroachment, since the affected communities had succeeded in making forest encroachment a political issue. The NRM manifesto 2006 for example provides that,

The evictions from forest reserves, however, shall be suspended until the review of the whole policy on forest reserves has been completed. What were these forests for? Were they for ecological resources or only as sources of wood and timber? Where a forest reserve is for ecological resources, it must be upheld. If it was, on the other hand, merely for wood and timber, there is a need for more flexibility<sup>30</sup>.

The implications for this soft stance and mixed signals by the NRM party during elections, was that National Forestry Authority, a body charged for protection of forests was handicapped and could not execute its duties. The second implication was that more new encroachers entered into forest reserves to take advantage of the future possibility of becoming legal occupants. Shortly after the President issued a directive stopping forest evictions, the New Vision newspaper reported that thousands of people had forcefully taken over the forests. The article revealed that,

About 5500 people have forcefully occupied the forest reserves in Kibale district following President Museveni's directive stopping evictions from wetlands and forest reserves. The sector manager National Forest for Kibaale Goded Aryatwihayo said, "People are clearing forests during the night and chasing away NFA staff who are trying to prevent further encroachment. The situation is alarming"<sup>31</sup>

Following reports of massive fresh encroachment on forest reserves, the former Minister of Lands, Water and Environment Major Gen. Kahinda Otafiire directed NFA to halt fresh encroachment on forest reserves. In his statement the Minister pointed that "no new forest encroachment or expansion of the encroachment will be permitted". The problem here is that there are several conflicting signals and messages which are confusing.

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29 See, Museveni annoys environmentalists, New Vision, January 21, 2006.

30 NRM Manifesto 2006, p. 55.

31 See, Ismael Kasooha, "Thousands raid forests", The New Vision, January 23, 2006.

To most conservationists and political analysts, the President's directive was confusing and contradictory. Godber Tumushabe commenting about the President's directive observed that,

...it directly undermines the ability of government institutions such as NEMA, NFA and the Wetlands Inspection Division (WID) which are mandated to manage these resources on behalf of the people of Uganda. It is an assault on the Constitution and other laws. In a functioning democracy, tax payers would question why they should continue to finance these institutions<sup>32</sup>

Government policy and decision making needs to be coherent, consistent, and predictable, and empowering to the institutions established to perform specific specialized functions. The consequences of failure to work with established institutions become costly in the long run and negatively make Government failure to achieve national development programmes such as the Poverty Eradication Action Plan (PEAP).

### **5.2. Case 2: Degazetting of Butamira Forest Reserve in Jinja district, Kagoma County**

The degazetting of Butamira Forest Reserve is another case that shows NRM's mixed commitment to good environmental stewardship. In 1997 Kakira Sugar Works Company applied to the Forestry Department to utilize Butamira Forest Reserve to expand its operations in sugar cane growing. The company was granted permission to grow sugarcane and a new permit was issued effectively in July 1998 in unclear circumstances. Unlike the previous permit held by the company, the new permit gave the company the rights to put the entire Butamira Forest Reserve under use for general purposes.

Interestingly, the permit was given in total disregard to the user rights of tree farmers who had originally been given permits by Government to plant trees. The permit to Kakira Sugar Works in essence extinguished the user rights of tree farmers without considering their future survival and the integrity of the Forest Reserve. Consequently, the Butamira Tree Farmers constituted themselves into Butamira Tree Farmers Pressure Group with support from their area Member of Parliament and public interest litigation organizations petitioned Parliamentary Committee on Natural Resources. This intervention merely managed to halt the pace of the transaction-degazetting of Butamira Forest Reserve and also the treatment of tree farmers who were finally compensated.

After heated debates that pre-occupied the 7<sup>th</sup> Parliament, on March 20,

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32 See, Godber Tumushabe, "Eviction order abets suicide", New Vision, February 2006.

2002 by majority vote in the Sessional Committee on Natural Resources decided to grant a permit to Kakira Sugar Works<sup>33</sup>. The granting of the five year permit to Kakira Sugar Works simply extinguished the farming rights of the tree farmers and in effect degazetted Butamira Forest Reserve in disregard of its ecological value to the environment.

By granting a five year permit which in effect amounts to change of land use and extinguishing user rights of tree farmers who were coexisting harmoniously with the forest reserve, Government breached the Doctrine of Public Trust. The Doctrine of Public Trust in essence is the legal right of the public to use certain land and waters. It governs the use of property where a given authority in this case Government holds in trust title for the citizens. Citizens have two co-existing interests in trust land: *jus publicum*, which is the public right to use and enjoy trust land, and the *jus privatum*, which is the private property right that may exist in the use, and possession of trust lands.

In Uganda, the Doctrine of Public Trust was enshrined in the 1995 Constitution in its National Objectives and Directive Principles of State Policy which states as follows:-

“The State shall protect important natural resources, including land, water, wetlands, minerals, oil, fauna and flora on behalf of the people of Uganda”

The Public Trust Doctrine is further restated in Article 237 (2) (b) of the Constitution which states that,

“The Government or a Local Government as determined by Parliament by law, shall hold in trust for the people and protect, natural lakes, rivers, wetlands, forest reserves, game reserves National Parks and any land to be reserved for ecological and tourist purposes for the common good of all citizens”

Following Parliaments’ decision to throw out the Butamira petition, ACODE and Butamira Forest Environmental Pressure Group comprising of 1510 members took a legal action against Government. In a High Court ruling delivered by Justice Rubby Aweri Opio, the court concluded as follows,

“...Butamira saga is more delicate because it involves the interests of the local community whereby even common sense should demand that an Environmental Impact Assessment study be carried out to determine social, political, cultural and economic impact of the project. If it is true that land in Uganda belongs to the people as provided in the law, it should be equally

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33 Godber W. Tumushabe & Arthur Bainomugisha, Op cit, 15.

true that the local community in Butamira should have been consulted as a matter of transparency, accountability and good governance as demanded by the public trust doctrine... To the above reason I do agree that the second respondent (NEMA) failed in its duty to ensure that Environmental Impact Assessment was carried out as required by law"<sup>34</sup>.

The Justice further observes that, "The right to health does not stop at physical health. It covers intellectual, moral, cultural, spiritual, political and social wellbeing. Politically and socially, Butamira Forest reserve belongs to the local community in Butamira. The people of Butamira also have a moral, cultural, economic and spiritual attachment to Butamira Forest Reserve as a source of sports, worship, herbal medicine, economic etc. It was therefore not proper to deprive them without consulting them and conducting a proper study. Lastly in alienating the reserve the second respondent also failed in its constitutional and statutory duty to conserve the environment and natural resources equitably and the benefit of both the present and future generations"<sup>35</sup>.

### 5.3. Case 3: Stopping of NEMA Encroachers' Evictions in Wetlands in Kabale District

Another instance of questionable commitment to environmental protection by the NRM party is demonstrated by the President's directive to National Environmental Management Authority (NEMA) to stop evictions of wetland encroachers in Kabale district during the presidential campaigns in Kabale district<sup>36</sup>. Kabale district is one of the most densely populated districts in Uganda. As a copying mechanism by the population to get more land for cultivation has meant encroachment on wetlands-swamps. This has greatly degraded the environment and further aggravated the food security problem and worsened climatic conditions. In order to reserve the deteriorating climatic conditions the National Environment Management Authority (NEMA) directed evictions on the encroachers. The encroachers appealed to the President during the heat of presidential elections and evictions were stopped prompting analysts to observe that such presidential directives have been taken for the sake of gaining political capital. In the case of Kabale district the President said,

I hereby direct NEMA to stop evictions but sensitize the people on how to use them (wetlands). We should not give chance to the opposition to use such mistakes to de-campaign the NRM government.<sup>37</sup>

As a consequence, it is hardly surprising, therefore, that the country

<sup>34</sup> See, Justice Rubby Aweri, High Court Ruling...

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.,

<sup>36</sup> see Daily Monitor, Friday January 6, 2006

<sup>37</sup> see Daily Monitor, Friday, January 6, 2006

is currently experiencing 'warning signs' indicative of environmental mismanagement namely, dry spells in several districts in Uganda, low food harvests<sup>38</sup>, deforestation and drying up of wetlands<sup>39</sup>, the shrinking of Lake Victoria water level<sup>40</sup>, and the imminent closure of one of the Hydro Electricity Power Stations at Jinja.<sup>41</sup> The contradiction between the NRM's stated commitments on one hand and actual practice on the other presents a challenge for policy analysts and conservationists to predict with certainty that Uganda will achieve sustainable livelihoods and sustainable development in the next five years. This scenario leaves environmental organizations and policy advocates one major option to massively sensitize the masses to create awareness that environmental degradation will not only commit them



*Women clearing part of the forest for cultivation. At this point of forest/ wetland encroachment, the future generation may never have a chance to see how a forest looks like. (cover photo).*

to poverty but endangers the future of their children. People need to be educated to see the looming danger arising out of our sacrifice of the future for the present powerful interests and short term gains. Already, the country is facing an energy crisis arising out of the drying up of Lake Victoria the largest lake in Uganda.<sup>42</sup> Unless environmental protection and good stewardship is made an electoral issue so that the citizens make it an election

promise, the country will soon be plunged into an environmental humanitarian crisis.

#### 5.4. Case 4: Quest to establish a Golf Course in Queen Elizabeth National Park by Madhvani Group of Companies

Recently, the Madivan Group of Companies renewed their proposal to Government to construct a Golf Course in Mweya Peninsular of Queen Elizabeth National Park with support from government officials as its front runners. This very proposal was rejected in 1996 by the three previous Executive Directors of UWA and two previous UWA Boards based on the provisions of the Comprehensive Management Plan for Queen Elizabeth National Park. The prohibition of the golf course was based on lack of expressed need and the inappropriate use determinations that this activity would;

38 Daily Monitor, Monday, January 2, 2006

39 Daily Monitor, Wednesday, January 4, 2006

40 Daily Monitor, Saturday, January 7, 2006

41 Daily Monitor, Friday, January 6, 2006

42 See, Muhereza Kyamutera, " Who let the waters out?, Daily Monitor February 7, 2006.



- ❖ cause an unacceptable impact;
- ❖ Be inconsistent with the park purposes or values;
- ❖ Unreasonably interfere with park programmes or activities;
- ❖ Create an unsafe or unhealthful environment for visitors or employees; and
- ❖ Result in significant conflict with other appropriate uses.

To most analysts the timing of the renewal of the proposal was culculated to tap into the political mood in the country and also taking advantage of lack of a substantive board at UWA. The NRM Government has consistently pursued a strategy of attracting foreign investments even when such investments may negatively affect the integrity of the environment. Secondly, the proposal comes at a time when UWA, the body mandated to manage the National Parks, has no substantive board and therefore weak to resist political pressure. Bart Young the former Chief of Party/UWA Planning Technical Advisor for Uganda's Action Program for Environment commenting on Madhvani's renewed proposal has said,

The timing of this new proposal and push for a decision approving a golf course on the peninsula is occurring in the absence of a UWA Board of Trustees. The timing of the proposal gives the appearance of impropriety- a few opportunistic individuals taking advantage of a temporary lapse in UWA decision-making authority<sup>43</sup>

While Government has not yet consented to the renewed proposal from the money magnets; with overwhelming political influence on politicians that 'matter', the golf course may soon be allowed to pass. Once the golf course has passed through, it is most likely that the investor may ask for more concessions leading to further encroachment on the park. The Government decision on the golf course is going to be a fundamental measurement of its commitment to environmental stewardship and good governance.

#### **5.5. Case 5: Failure by the NRM Government to put into place Strategic Environmental Policies: A Case of the Soils Policy**

As already pointed out, Uganda is a nature based economy with majority of the population approximately 22 million people dependent on agriculture living in the rural areas. As a matter of fact, any government that is committed to sustainable livelihoods for its citizens, it would be devoting financial and policy decisions aimed at conserving the sustainability of the soils and land resources. It has been acknowledged in the Poverty Eradication Action Plan (PEAP) and a number of government policy documents have indicated that increasing poverty levels are largely due to poor yields as a result of soil degradation. At the same time the PEAP preparation process revealed that

43 See, Bart Young, Mweya golf: Casinos, Didi's World next?, The New Vision, May 4, 2006.

soil degradation costs Uganda's economy Ug.Shs. 225 billion per year<sup>44</sup>. In spite of this reality, the NRM Government has taken 10 years developing a Soils Policy and is yet to complete and operationalize it. Consequently, substantial amounts of tax payers money has been injected in the policy development process with no results while soil degradation continues. Based on the Government's failure to complete the soils policy, land policy and others point to its lack of serious commitment to protect the environment, fight poverty and ensure sustainable development.

## 6. FORUM FOR DEMOCRATIC CHANGE (FDC) AND THE ENVIRONMENT

Forum for Democratic Change (FDC) is the second largest political party in Uganda. In the recently concluded presidential elections, the FDC leader Dr (Rt.) Col. Kiiza Besigye got 37% of the total valid votes cast loosing to the NRM's President Yoweri Museveni who won with 59%. However, FDC challenged the validity of the poll results and the matter had to be settled by the Supreme Court which ruled in favor of the NRM's candidate President Yoweri Museveni. FDC won 37 parliamentary seats and constitutionally as a majority opposition party is mandated to appoint the leader of the opposition in Parliament.



*Dr. Kiiza Besigye Presidential candidate (FDC) during the 2006 election campaigns. In spite of its strength as the second largest party and strong appeal to many Ugandans, FDC did not advance the Environmental agenda as its priority.*

In comparison with the UPC Manifesto, the FDC manifesto does not explicitly provide for environmental protection and governance as an independent issue. Rather, the manifesto provides for environmental conservation under a subtitle unlike the NRM manifesto which explicitly provides for environmental conservation and protection under its own heading. Nevertheless, the FDC manifesto provides that the party will triple government investment in agriculture within five years upon coming into power". It further promises to institute programmes to promote livestock production, fisheries, aquaculture, tree planting and forest development" as special elements of the agricultural sector. However other than 'tree planting' and 'forest development', the FDC does not categorically state how sustainable 'livestock', 'fisheries' and 'aquaculture' will be 'promoted'<sup>45</sup>.

44 See, Onesmus Mugenyi, NRM failing itself on poverty war, Daily Monitor, July 10, 2006.

45 See, Forum for Democratic Change, Election Manifesto 2006, p. 17.

### 6.1. Mining

In the mining sector, the FDC Manifesto promised to defend the property rights of people affected by mining developments, and to ensure adequate compensation for them. The Manifesto does not go further to explain how apart from fair and adequate compensation, it would ensure that the affected communities benefit from the proceeds of the natural resources-minerals. Mining activities in most parts of the world have adverse effects on the environment and the communities in which it is being carried out. As such, serious environmental management needs to be put into place to mitigate against such adverse effects. The FDC manifesto does not provide in a concise manner how negative impacts will be prevented and how communities will be protected from environmental harm.

### 6.2. Tourism

The FDC's manifesto is perhaps more elaborate on tourism development and environment. FDC promised to invest in tourism to maximally exploit Uganda's natural endowments and cultural heritage. The manifesto states that,

We will encourage every Ugandan where possible to promote the country as a best place on earth to visit, invest and live in<sup>46</sup>.

To realize this objective, the party pledged to do the following;

- Support improvements of, and strengthen the protection of National Parks, game and forest reserves as well as sites of religious and cultural importance; and
- Establish standards for environmental and urban development to enhance public hygiene and transform the aesthetic value and tourism potential of our country.

However, in the energy sector it is doubtful if the FDC's ambitious programme will rhyme with its environmental concerns. For instance, the party spells out its commitment "to [establish] an affordable, reliable and more extensive electricity supply across Uganda, [by] fast-track[ing] construction of the big hydro power dams along the river Nile [and] increase micro-hydro stations, and exploit new and renewable sources of energy"<sup>47</sup>. While the FDC manifesto makes a good promise on energy supply, it does not go ahead to articulate how they will ensure the flow of water in the rivers such as the Nile and others which would certainly require substantive financial investment in restoration of the environment in areas where there has been total degradation especially in water catchment areas. There are several reasons why the country is experiencing the energy crisis at the moment and FDC needed to articulate these issues and show how they will be overcome during their tenure of office as a ruling party.

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46 Ibid, . p.18.

47 FDC Manifesto 2006:20

## 7. UGANDA PEOPLE'S CONGRESS (UPC) AND THE ENVIRONMENT

### 7.1. Management of the Environment

The Uganda Peoples Congress (UPC) manifesto recognizes the importance of sound environmental management as important for sustenance of life of all living creatures. In order to manage the environment and reverse the serious environmental degradation going on in Uganda, UPC intends to:

- Adopt policies that will strike a balance between economic demands and protection of the environment for posterity;
- Review existing legislation and regulation regarding the environment and bring them in consonance with international and national interests; and
- Include environmental studies in school curricula and community training and mobilization programmes.



*Uganda Peoples Congress (UPC) boss Miria Obote during the 2006 election campaigns. In spite of her gender appeal towards women, Ms. Obote did not link Environmental conservation with women's empowerment to improve their livelihoods. Since majority of women are natural resource dependent.*

### 7.2. Management of Natural Resources

#### 7.2.1. Management of Land

Uganda Peoples Congress political manifesto recognizes the fact that Uganda as a country is well endowed with fertile arable land vital for agriculture. It also notes that Uganda is well endowed with minerals and forests that are critical for the country's economic growth. The UPC manifesto is critical of the NRM Movement Government for depriving the citizens of their land rights without adequate compensation arguing that land is central to the livelihoods and survival of majority Ugandans. To that end the UPC Manifesto promises to:

- Develop policies for effective and optimal utilization of land resources for economic development. The Uganda Land Commission and the District Land Boards will be restructured to make them responsive to the needs of the people;
- To modernize the Land Registry with the technology to ensure efficiency in handling and safeguarding people's title deeds. UPC will review all land transactions with a view to giving redress to those whose land

rights have been violated; and

- Will review the set up of land tribunals all over the country and ensure that land disputes are adjudicated upon expeditiously.

### **7.2.2. Management of Water**

The UPC Manifesto underscores the fact that the world is experiencing climatic changes that will significantly affect Uganda and Africa in particular negatively. The manifesto for example notes that by 2020s Africa will be warmer by 0.6 °C-2.4 °C relative to the 1961-1990 baselines and this will increase up to 3.8 C by 2080. In some parts of Africa, rainfall is predicted to decrease by 5% by 2020 and by 10% by 2050 while certain areas will receive a significant increase in rainfall. The manifesto quoting scientific sources reveals that it is predicted that the dry and rainy seasons are likely to be unpredictable with occasional droughts and floods which will have profound impacts on agriculture and agro-based industries. The manifesto does not spell out what the party's actions to reverse the climatic changes are going to be once it is in power.

The UPC manifesto further observes that access to clean water is a basic right and to ensure the provision of adequate and clean water UPC will:

- Prioritize rehabilitation and construction of water supply to vital establishments including hospitals, schools and public institutions;
- Establish an authority to manage and supervise water harvesting through damming, boreholes and irrigation infrastructure for agriculture, fish farming, animal and human consumption;
- Mobilize resources and technical assistance to exploit water resources;
- Put in place mechanisms to harness and utilize rainwater; and
- Construct deep boreholes fitted with wind-mills to supply villages with clean water.

### **7.2.3. Development of Agriculture, Fisheries and Animal Industry**

The UPC manifesto underscores the fact that Uganda is an agricultural based economy with majority of the population dependent on agriculture. The UPC manifesto also notes that over time the contribution of agriculture to the national economy has been declining leading to an increase in the number of people living below the poverty line currently estimated at 38%<sup>48</sup>. Consequently, upon taking over political power, UPC promised to reverse the trend by:

- supporting and facilitating research on crops, livestock, fisheries and forestry and appropriate technology;
- encouraging organic farming [and] promote and revive farming

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48 See, Uganda Peoples Congress Manifesto 2006, p.39.

methods [such as] crop rotation, terracing (where necessary), and resting land in order to conserve soil quality;

- encouraging safe application of biotechnology in agriculture;
- formulating policies [to] facilitate development of irrigation and food storage [to] ensure food security given the unpredictability of weather conditions; and
- Revitalize District Farm Institutes to teach modern farming practices.

### 7.3. Fisheries

The UPC manifesto observes that fish is not only a vital source of food protein for a significant number of Uganda's population, but also a source of export earnings. Fisheries offer employment to fishermen, processors, transporters etc. In spite of the profitability of fish, especially the exports to European Union Uganda fishing industry is facing considerable pressure which threatens to deplete the resource in lakes and rivers. In order to conserve the fish resources UPC manifesto pledges to:

- Formulate policies that will maintain an equilibrium between fish production and the breeding and harvesting of fish in water bodies;
- Encourage efficient fishing methods and practices;
- Gazette specific wetlands where large fish ponds will be constructed to breed fish that will periodically be released into lakes and rivers; and
- Develop appropriate infrastructure including construction of cold storage systems.

### 7.4. Forestry

With regard to forests the UPC manifesto promises to develop the forestry resources by:

- Focusing on afforestation programmes, reclamation and rehabilitation of forests, expansion of soft wood forests, preservation of natural forests and sustainable utilization of forests for posterity;
- Invest in research programmes to enhance utilization and protection of forestry resources;
- Encourage and support private investment in commercial forestry; and
- Facilitate local residents to plant and own forestry holdings.

### 7.5. Management of Mineral Resources

The UPC manifesto points out that the party points out that the mining industry is an important component in the overall regeneration of our economy. The party pledges to strengthen:

- The relevant organs in government involved in the mining industry so that they are better equipped to undertake their supervisory and monitoring roles;
- Encourage private sector investment especially foreign investors with solid experience, in mining sub-sector and will pursue a policy of value addition;
- Review and streamline structures and mechanisms for awarding of mining rights as well as the relevant mining laws to ensure equity and an attractive environment to both the investors and the local communities; and
- Institute special programmes for the promotion and support of small-scale mining enterprises.

### 7.6. Energy

The UPC manifesto observes that although Uganda is well endowed with vast natural resources of hydropower with estimated potential of over 2000 MW, there is a serious energy crisis in the country, mainly as a result of greed, corruption and faulty planning within the NRM establishment. UPC noted that the energy sector has been characterized by:

- Un reliable and intermittent power supply causing destructive power fluctuations and frequent power cuts which have negatively impacted on the competitiveness of manufacturers;
- High tariffs, which have driven poor members of society to using firewood and charcoal at the expense of forests and the environment;
- Wrong decisions leading to building the second dam (Kiira) at adjacent to the Owen Falls Power station; and
- Indecision on the development of Bujagali and Karuma Dams.

In order to reverse the energy crisis trends upon coming into power UPC promised to:

- Evolve a comprehensive policy on energy that will involve a national strategic plan for rural electrification with a combination of hydro, thermal, solar and wind energy;
- Support biogas and biomass energy systems in communities which provide natural basic raw material or have comparative advantages;
- Support and closely follow oil and natural gas exploration programmes in all possible sites;
- Support programmes that advocate energy conservation measures; and
- Ensure that poor people do not destroy trees (environment) on account of inability to access other energy sources.

Compared to the NRM and FDC manifestos, the UPC manifesto is more detailed on environment and natural resources protection. However, the manifesto does not provide sufficient mechanisms and strategies of addressing

environmental problems facing the country. Secondly, the manifesto is so generic that it does not specifically target particular beneficiaries of environmental protection. Because of lack of specificity, it may become difficult for any particular constituency to hold the party accountable based on its manifesto promises.

Most importantly, UPC a party which ruled Uganda from 1962-1971 and 1980-85 lacks a track record of good environmental governance, which perhaps could explain why its current manifesto is so generic and does not make specific commitments upon which it can be assessed. Godber Tumushabe commenting about environmental governance during the UPC leadership in the late 1970's has observed,

At the political level, there was no apparent commitment to judicious management of natural resources. The Common Man's Charter, the blue print document outlining strategic political and economic thinking of Uganda Peoples Congress (UPC) Government, in the (1970s) did not explicitly recognize the significance of natural resources in sustaining political, economic and social structures. While the charter reaffirmed the Government's desire to plan economic development to raise the standards of living, it emphasized very little the central role that natural resources would play in facilitating Uganda's move to the left.<sup>49</sup>

In 1980 after the fall of Idi Amin's reign of terror and re-introduction of multiparty democracy in Uganda, UPC's manifesto came up with several similar promises for natural resources management that were never implemented. For instance the UPC Government promised to revise the existing land policy; to increase the rate of maintaining the existing softwood plantations; to improve and preserve the natural forests, and to promote afforestation; to promote livestock and fisheries production; and to re-equip and rehabilitate the parks, hotels and lodges; to promote tourism and industry. A critical analysis of UPC's performance at the time the Government was overthrown by the military in 1985 indicates that these promises were never translated into practical realities. Rampant corruption, a demoralized civil service, high military expenditure and the insurgency made it difficult to implement the otherwise promising and good programme.

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49 See, Godber W. Tumushabe, "Environmental Governance, Political Change and constitutional development in Uganda", in H.W.O. Okoth-Ogendo and Godber W. Tumushabe (eds.), *Governing the Environment: Political Change and Natural Resources Management in Eastern and Southern Africa*, ACTS PRESS 1999, P. 68.



Apparently, the economic programme initiated by the UPC Government as part of the economic rehabilitation did not recognize the importance of natural resources in political and socio-economic development. When the Government adopted the first structural adjustment and stabilization programme, it was not based on any research to establish the impact of the adjustment package on natural resources. The 1981 macro-economic program adopted a classic adjustment package with the following components: liberalization of the exchange rate, liberalization of trade through increased producer prices for traditional exports; a commitment to fiscal and monetary rigour to reduce the budgetary deficits financed by the Central Bank, and thus release inflationary pressures on the economy. The minimal gains of the early years of the adjustment program were, however, reversed from 1984 mainly by expanding expenditure on the military, escalating instability as well as relaxing of Government expenditure in the run up to the elections that were never held in 1985 due to the military coup.

One of the negative consequences of the program was the cutting of Government expenditure which further crippled the already devastated environment management institutions. Environmental agencies such as the Forestry Department, the Fisheries Department, the Uganda National Parks and the Game Department were constantly in dire need of both the operational and development funds<sup>50</sup>. This resulted into the Government supervisory agencies failure to curb illegal activities that stretched from the 1970's through the first half of the 1980's. The previous UPC practice on environmental management does not demonstrate practical commitment to implement sound environmental governance programmes. The UPC political party leadership needed to promise more to the citizens in respect to environmental governance. Because the manifesto fell short of a firm and committed environmental agenda, citizens may think that the party under new leadership is simply continuing its past legacy. It is not too late, the party could still give the citizens confidence by coming up with party statements and other political actions that demonstrate UPC's environmental good stewardship.

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50 Ibid., p.72.

## 8. THE DEMOCRATIC PARTY (DP) AND THE ENVIRONMENT

### 8.1. Energy and environment, Transport and Regional Development

As a growing economy, Uganda needs to boost domestic energy sources, without accelerating environment degradation. Efficiencies will be derived from improving our transport infrastructure and mapping it to equitably distributed development<sup>51</sup>

The Democratic Party realizes the importance of the environment and the nexus between environment and energy hence the need for sustainable utilization of energy without compromising the environment. The manifesto provides that once in power the DP government will formulate a comprehensive and long range energy policy for the production of solar, hydro, thermal, geo-thermal, wind and biological energy. The manifesto further outlines what the DP intends to do in the area of environmental and energy governance such as:



*Sebana Kizito Presidential candidate of (DP) during the 2006 election campaigns. He expressed interest in environmental governance issues, but did not quite articulate how he was going to advance the issues once elected President.*

- Rationalize and harmonize regional energy policies in order to develop and equitably share regional energy resources;
- Promote the construction of environmentally-friendly hydro-electricity facilities;
- Encourage use of solar power for areas that cannot be connected to the national grid;
- Support efforts by the National Forestry Authority to plant new forests and curb further depletion of natural forests for industrial concessions;
- Extend protection of vulnerable wetlands and enforce NEMA guidance on environmental use;
- Extend forest cover by two million hectares in the next 10 years;
- Require and facilitate each rural household to plant and maintain a wood lot sufficient for supplying its fuel needs;
- Promote sustainable harvesting plans in national forests by balancing tree harvests with tree planting;
- Reduce pollution of water bodies;
- Invest in the production and use of highly efficient cooking stoves and

<sup>51</sup> See, The Democratic Party Manifesto 2006, p. 19.

- brick-making kilns;
- Phase out generational motor vehicles that cannot meet modern emission standards; and
- Involve traditional leaders in promoting traditional environmental use practices.

The irony with the Democratic Party is that while its main identity is the green color which is widely used to symbolize the environment, compared to NRM, FDC and UPC, its manifesto is the least elaborate on environmental governance. One wonders whether its long absence in the State House could explain its loss of touch with the core issues such as the environmental crisis currently facing the country that is at the heart of most citizens. Most of the Democratic Party promises are outlined without giving adequate information on the state of environmental matters and alternative policy options for intervention. Secondly, the environment is not treated as a critical sector on its own. It is rather mixed up with transport and regional integration. The danger with such mix up is that once a sector is not prioritized it gets marginalized and can be suffocated. Like women's issues, a political party that seeks to promote environmental governance based on its critical importance to the economy and livelihood issues, must prioritize it as a matter that needs affirmative action.

### **Guiding Principles that voters should look for in Political Party Manifestos**

- **Comprehensive Coverage of environmental Issues in the Manifestos**

It is generally believed that the environment and natural resources cover wildlife, forestry, biomass, fisheries, wetlands, minerals, pollution, waste management and climate change. Voters should always scrutinize how comprehensive political party manifestos would have articulated a governance agenda for the management of each of the components of the environment and natural resources.

- **Commitment to Promote the Right to a Clean and Health Environment**

Article 39 of the 1995 Ugandan Constitution provides that, "Every Ugandan has a right to a clean and healthy environment". While the 1995 Constitution provides for a right to clean and healthy environment, this right has largely remained on paper. There is widespread environmental water and air pollution, especially in Kampala City and other towns arising out of traffic pollution and polluting industries and construction work. Political party manifestos should be put to task to articulate their political agenda regarding their commitment to making Article 39 a firm reality.

- **Commitment to respect existing Environmental Laws**

Since 1986, when the National Resistance Government came into power, there has been a general improvement in the legal framework for environmental protection and natural resource management in Uganda. Notable among the laws passed since 1995 are; The National Environment Act 1995, The water Act 1997, the National Forestry and Tree Planting Act 2003, The Mining Act 2003, The Petroleum Supply Act 2003, The Land Amendment Act 2003 and The Nile Basin Initiative Act 2002. As already pointed out in the preceding sections of this paper, in spite of the progress made in legislative framework regarding environmental governance, the NRM government has not strictly implemented the existing laws especially in matters regarding the degazettment of forest reserves as the case of Butamira Forest Reserve<sup>52</sup> and now Mabira Forest Reserve demonstrate. On the basis of this realization, voters should audit political party manifestos commitment to implement existing laws on environment.

- **Budget Allocation Commitment**

In spite of the fact that Uganda is a nature based and dependent economy, the Environment and Natural resources sector continues to be marginalized and overlooked in terms of budget allocations compared to other sectors such as health, education and defence. For example in this years' budget estimates (2006/7) defence portfolio has been allocated 342,070,193 billion, Agriculture, Animal Husbandry and Fisheries 9,398,177 and 3,519,879 for



*Soil Erosion along Sir Apollo Kagwa Road in Kampala. (cover photo) Source: New Vision Library*

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52 See, Godber W. Tumushabe, Rose Mwebaza and Ronald Naluwayira, "Sustainable Utilization of Our Natural Heritage: Legal Implications of the Proposed Degazettment of Butamira Forest Reserve", ACODE Policy Research Series, No. 4, 2001, p. 8.

Water and Environment<sup>53</sup>.

Table for Comparison of MTEF provisions for some sectors including donor project aid 2005/06 - 2008/09 (Excluding arrears and non VAT taxes) (in billions of Uganda shillings)

| Sector/Vote     | 2005/06<br>(Budget) | 2006/07<br>Projected | 2007/08<br>Projected | 2008/09<br>Projected |
|-----------------|---------------------|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|
| Security        | 374.0               | 372.5                | 375.7                | 398.6                |
| Roads and Works | 374.1               | 439.2                | 501.8                | 526.5                |
| Agriculture     | 148.9               | 137.2                | 176.4                | 214.1                |
| Education       | 635.6               | 708.4                | 749.8                | 857.8                |
| Health          | 508.7               | 375.4                | 334.1                | 424.6                |
| Law and Order   | 181.6               | 185.5                | 193.2                | 221.8                |
| Accountability  | 174.4               | 183.5                | 175.6                | 189.8                |
| ENR (MWLE)      | 20.36               | 25.60                | 24.47                | 37.17                |

Source: MoFPED, March 2006, National Budget Framework paper for FY 2006/07

- 2008/09, pg. 100 and annex 2

While appreciating the need to ensure peace and security in the country as a justification for a huge defence budget, one has to appreciate the nexus between environmental degradation and scarcity and security. In other words, realistic budget spending in the environment and natural resources sector would ultimately reduce security threats for any particular country. Commenting on marginalization of the environment and natural resources sector in terms of budget allocation, ACODE in a memorandum submitted to the 8<sup>th</sup> Parliament during the debate on the budget for the Financial Year 2006/2007 it was observed that,

that a national budget that appreciates that the economy is dependent on the environment and natural resources, but does not allocate sufficient resources to the management of the sector, is like milking a cow that is being starved; obviously it will get to a point and collapse and the cow will be lost as well as the milk<sup>54</sup>

To this end, the electorate should base their choice of any political party

53 See, Draft Estimates for Revenue and Expenditure( Recurent and Development) FY 2006/7 for the Year Ending on 30th June 2006.

54 "Marginalization of the Environment and Natural Resources Sector: The Roots of Economic Crisis and Poverty", A Policy Memorandum submitted by ACODE to the 8th Parliament during the debate on the budget for the Financial Year 2006/2007, p. 12.

based on its manifestos promise to provide adequate budget support to the environment and natural resources sector once in power.

## 9. RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

- **All Political Parties should be committed to protect the integrity of the Environment and Natural Resources**

There is compelling evidence both in the literature as well as in this paper that majority of Ugandans depend on environmental assets for their sustenance and survival. For instance, the Housing and Population Census report on Uganda of 2000, established that the agricultural sector alone contributes 42% of the total GDP; and accounts for 85% of the export earnings and provides approximately 80% of employment. It is further noted



*Obed Bwanika an Independent Presidential candidate during the 2006 election campaigns. He lacked the Party infrastructure to pursue environmental issues.*

that Majority of Ugandans estimated at 88% who live in rural areas depend on the environment and natural resources for their livelihoods. In spite of the vast natural resource endowment, Uganda's natural capital has been on the decline driven largely by poor and inappropriate policies, demographic factors and poor farming practices by communities which are governance issues.

Consequently environmental degradation is leading to climate change resulting into food shortages and increased pressure on land, water and pasture in most parts of the country. Ultimately this is becoming a major fault line for what most people characterize ethnic based conflicts in Uganda. Unless, practical steps are undertaken to reverse the trends, Uganda is likely to suffer intractable natural resource based conflicts that could reverse the economic gains recorded since 1986. On the basis of the above realization, any political party that does not have a concrete, and elaborate environmental governance agenda committed to upholding the rule of law and implementation of existing legislation should not be entrusted with political power.

- **Political Parties must be held accountable for their manifesto promises at all times**

As we have seen in the past some political parties have made promises to

protect and conserve the environment during the election campaigns and once in Government simply abandon such promises as was the case of the Uganda Peoples Congress in the first half of the 1980. However, the consequences of un fulfilled promises have been gross mismanagement and degradation of our natural resources and environment. Already Environmental security analysts point out that unless Uganda acts now to reverse the environmental degradation trends, the current development is not sustainable and the current generation will be bequeathing an ecological debt to the future generations. The NRM has made several promises in its manifesto regarding environmental governance, it would be important to have a balance sheet between its promises and practice as it steers the country in the next five years (2006-2011).

- **The Political Parties and Organizations Act should be amended to provide for a timeframe within which Political Parties must publish their manifestos for public scrutiny**

Experience from the last concluded presidential and parliamentary elections shows that most political parties did not produce their manifestos on time for several reasons including financial, technical and strategic reasons. Some of them reasoned that their ideas would be pirated if they came out first and waited to produce political manifestos at the last minute. On the other hand some lacked expertise in several areas and as such came out with promises that were not well researched and grounded in analysis. The delay by political parties to come out with manifestos greatly disadvantages the electorate who need time to choose a better political program/ package from an array of promises by several parties. In future, parties' fitness and political correctness to govern should be pegged on their ability to come out early with a good manifesto.

- **The opposition political parties should champion the environmental governance agenda**

The political opposition parties should champion the environmental governance agenda to compel Government to implement its manifesto promises. The review of political party manifestos revealed that the major four parties promised to promote sound environmental management. In a functioning democracy the opposition are partners in government in a sense that they continue to provide checks and balances to the incumbent Government by continuously selling their political agenda and alternative policies to the electorate with a hope of being elected in future by the electorate. As we have seen, the incumbent NRM party always comes up with good promises for environmental management which in most cases are never implemented based on political calculations. The opposition needs to continuously remain engaged to make sure that the NRM implements its campaign promises regarding responsible stewardship of the environment.

- **Political Parties must undertake to protect and promote environmental rights**

Listening to most leaders of political parties especially in the opposition, their main political agenda seems that of promotion of civil and political rights and equitable distribution of development. Apparently, most parties do not realize that the environment is a very critical sector in the realization of the above rights. Most importantly, both Government and oppositions' failure to realize that environmental rights are human rights and therefore the enjoyment of human rights cannot be complete without environmental rights. Time has come for all the political actors, civil society and academia to start promoting the realization of human rights in a holistic manner. Political parties that espouse to be defenders and promoters of human rights should stand up and be counted as promoters of environmental rights as human rights.

- **Political Parties need to expose their leaders to environmental issues in order for them to champion environmental governance**

Since it is apparent that Uganda is a natural resource dependent country, it is imperative that people who aspire for political power are sufficiently exposed to this reality. During the time of conducting this research, it was discovered that most leaders of political parties were sympathetic to environmental governance but were not conversant with environmental issues. Because of this reality, it is recommended that political parties should as a matter of priority organize environmental awareness trainings to expose party leaders to environmental issues. This way, party leaders and contending legislators will be able to appreciate that other than promising schools, clinics, bridges and other forms of development which should ordinarily be the responsibility of Government, undertaking to promote the integrity of the environment and natural resources base is the most important way of providing for the electorate especially in Uganda's rural constituency.



## 10. CONCLUSION

By and far, all the four political party manifestos that were reviewed, it was found established that all of them had provided for environmental governance issues. However, the research team established that the UPC and NRM manifestos were more comprehensive in coverage of environmental issues than those of FDC and DP. In case of the NRM party, the research team found its commitment on environmental governance especially in respect to forestry resources inconsistent and always prone to political interference which undermines the independence and mandate of Government institutions charged for ensuring the integrity and sustainable utilization of any particular natural resources. In the energy sector, the NRM has the most comprehensive policy but it is yet to be seen whether the construction of all the projected Hydro Electricity Power Stations would follow sound environmental management systems and would also survive corruption tendencies of officials. The study makes a number of recommendations including vigorous environmental awareness training for party leaders and the electorate to create both the demand and supply sides of environmental protection, conservation and sustainable livelihoods for natural resource dependent communities.

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**Arthur Bainomugisha** is a Director of Research and Head of the Peace and Conflict Program at the Advocates Coalition for Development and Environment (ACODE). He is also a part-time Lecturer in the Peace and Conflict Studies Program, Makerere University as well as a Visiting Lecturer at Mbarara University of Science and Technology (MUST) in the Faculty of Development Studies. Before joining ACODE, he worked as a Civil Society Fellow with the International Peace Academy (IPA), a New York based public policy research think tank. He has carried out several researches and contributed articles in a number of publications on peace, security and environmental governance. Notable among his publication include: The Role of Civil Society in Peace Building in the Great Lakes Region, Constitutional Reforms and Environmental Legislative Representation in Uganda, The Torturous Peace Process in Northern Uganda, The Political Economy of Small Arms Proliferation in the Horn of Africa: The Case of Northern Uganda and Southern Sudan. Bainomugisha holds a Masters Degree in Peace Studies from the University of Bradford (United Kingdom) and a Bachelors Degree in Mass Communication from Makerere University, Uganda. He is currently pursuing a Doctoral Degree in Security and Development at the University of London (UK).



*While the discovery of oil resources present an opportunity for ending the misery of poverty in Uganda, unless prudent and democratic governance of the oil resources is pursued, it may become a curse and nightmare for the current and future generations. The silence by Political Parties on governance especially of revenue sharing shows that Parties have not prioritized national resources in their Political agendas.*

“Oil is a common heritage of Africa. Nevertheless, aspects of the oil Industry are deliberately concealed in mystery key facts about oil are often treated as state-secrets..... Building transparent and accountable “ Petro-states” focused on reducing poverty and building viable post- oil futures is one of the key challenges facing Africa in the 21st Century.” Bottom of the burrel, Africa’s Oil Boom and the poor. A report by The Catholic Relief Services (CRS).



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