

Knowledge Systems on Functioning and Resource Use Efficiency in Policy and Land Grabbing

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I. INTRODUCTION

Uganda lies in east central Africa, has a tropical climate, and fertile agricultural land. The country has a population of some 42 million, and is mainly land-locked, with Lake Victoria dominating the south east of the country. Agriculture accounts for just under a third of land use, and the country's main exports are coffee, fish, tea, tobacco and cotton. Some 15% of the country is covered by forest (U.S Department of State, 2012). Some 85% of the population live in rural areas and four in ten of the rural population, predominantly in the north and north east of the country, are considered to be living in abject poverty. Approximately five per cent of rural households are affected by food insecurity (Rural poverty portal, 2012).

Agriculture plays an important part in Uganda's economy, with 80% of all jobs in the agriculture and fishing sectors. While some cash crops are grown for export (particularly coffee, tea, cotton and tobacco), many rural communities have traditionally relied on subsistence agriculture, growing cassava, corn, potatoes and millet, as well as plants for medicinal uses (U.S Department of State, 2012).

In 1998, the Ugandan Government launched a Vegetable Oil Development Project (VODP), supported by the United Nations International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) and World Bank, to increase domestic production of vegetable oils in partnership with the private sector. This included the introduction of commercial oil Palm production, as well as more traditional oil seed developments in eastern and Midwestern Districts of Uganda (IFAD, 2011a). The Kalangala oil palm project aims to plant 10,000 hectares of oil palm on Bugala Island in Kalangala district in Lake Victoria. Bugala Island is one of the 84 islands in Lake Victoria which make up Kalangala district. The island has a population of around 20,000 people, who mainly depended on fishing, subsistence farming and tourism before the introduction of oil palm.

It is being taken forward by a partnership between the government and a private sector consortium, Oil Palm Uganda Limited (OPUL), formed in 2003. OPUL brings together foreign investment from:

- Global palm oil giant Wilmar International, one of the largest palm oil biodiesel manufacturers in the world. Wilmar has also benefitted from funding from the World Bank's private sector arm but has been implicated in illegally logging

rainforests, setting forests on fire and violating the rights of local communities in Indonesia. (Friends of the Earth International, 2007) BIDCO, the largest manufacturer of vegetable oils, fats, soaps, margarine and protein concentrates in East and Central Africa. The Kalangala project also gets significant funding from the World Bank. In 2006, the Kalangala Oil Palm Growers Trust (KOPGT), an association of local farmers, was established with support from IFAD, in order to promote local smallholder involvement in the palm oil project, joined the partnership, taking on a 10% holding in 2009 (IFAD, 2010; NAPE, 2011). As well as increasing domestic production of vegetable oil, the project was designed to improve the infrastructure on the island, increase rural incomes and reduce poverty

levels, attract private sector investment and to stimulate economic development in the area (IFAD, 2010; NAPE 2011). Local farmers were seen as important partners, with 3500 ha of the total 10,000 ha designated for out-growers and small holders. The rest would be managed by the nucleus estate (Kalangala District NGO Forum, 2009).

II. LIERATURE REVIEW

Land grabbing in Africa refers to the purchase or acquisition of use rights to produce food, biofuels, or animal feed. Over the last twenty years private, foreign investors and governments have often secured African land as investments, or to help meet their own national food security and biofuel needs (Daniel & Mittal, 2009). Although widely acknowledged as a global phenomenon, land grabbing is particularly prevalent in Africa given the continent's favourable biophysical resources and its lack of existing large-scale, industrialised agriculture and plantations compared to other continents (Anseeuw, 2013; Cotula et al., 2014). Many Africa governments, some with weak land tenure regulations and others needing to balance their budgets, breach existing customary and communal land tenure arrangements to reallocate land and forests to firms, foreign governments, and speculative investors - particularly for agricultural development.

Land users in regions where commercial agriculture is not yet significant, or where water is abundant, have proven to be particularly vulnerable to land grabbing (Allan et al, 2013). Firms and other actors promise jobs and technological transfer to local populations in exchange for access to their land through purchase or leases, but as the chapter will show, the gains are often fleeting or absent, and in many cases, they do

not 'trickle down' to the local communities (Anseeuw, 2013; O'Brien, 2011). The greatest impacts are felt by the poorest of the poor – those forest-dependent, farmer and herder Land grabbing in Africa refers to the purchase or acquisition of use rights to produce food, biofuels, or animal feed. Over the last twenty years private, foreign investors and governments have often secured African land as investments, or to help meet their own national food security and biofuel needs (Daniel & Mittal, 2009). Although widely acknowledged as a global phenomenon, land grabbing is particularly prevalent in Africa given the continent's favourable biophysical resources and its lack of existing large-scale, industrialised agriculture and plantations compared to other continents (Anseeuw, 2013; Cotula et al., 2014). Many Africa governments, some with weak land tenure regulations and others needing to balance their budgets, breach existing customary and communal land tenure arrangements to reallocate land and forests to firms, foreign governments, and speculative investors - particularly for agricultural development.

Land users in regions where commercial agriculture is not yet significant, or where water is abundant, have proven to be particularly vulnerable to land grabbing (Allan et al, 2013). Firms and other actors promise jobs and technological transfer to local populations in exchange for access to their land through purchase or leases, but as the chapter will show, the gains are often fleeting or absent, and in many cases, they do not 'trickle down' to the local communities (Anseeuw, 2013; O'Brien, 2011). The greatest impacts are felt by the poorest of the poor – those forest-dependent, farmer and herder.

The process is, therefore, a form of privatization (Green and Adams, 2015) or 'accumulation by dispossession' (Harvey, 2005). It involves the separation of labour from its means of production. Some of the processes Harvey describes include: displacement of peasant farmers in favour of large-scale producers; acquisition of land meant for food crop production to cultivate cash crops; and the privatization of common resources (such as land and forests). Land deals are therefore part of the 'marginalization of the African peasantry' (Bernstein, 1996). 'Simple capital accumulation' occurs where profits accrued elsewhere are reinvested in land for commercial speculation, because it is a good investment. But from the early stages of African grabbing in the 2000s, 'primitive accumulation' has also occurred – land was not purchased at its true value, but gifted or transferred to new owners, excluding local existing claimants' rights to what they believed to be a common resource. Primitive accumulation harks back to colonial times, when settlers allocated land to themselves at no cost.

The FAO suggests LSLAs involve more than 1,000 ha of land changing hands in a single deal; the direct involvement of governments or foreign investors; and negative impacts on local food security (Borras and Franco, 2012). Governments or formal state bodies are complicit in justifying and enabling the process of obtaining access to land that is said to be idle or sparsely populated; but the evidence is that most deals involve

some form of dispossession (Daniel & Mittal, 2009). This includes land deals that involve national, urban-based elites and firms that also seek to grow food and biofuel for profit – or simply to reserve land for the future - in productive, but sometimes lowly populated, regions (Hall, 2011). Acquisitions can also involve amalgamation of smaller parcels that add up to a significant 'grab' and which may still displace existing land users and land uses (Zoomers and Kaag, 2014). In some cases transferred land is held as a 'reserve' and its use is unaltered for years or even decades; in others, eviction occurs quickly. In the heavily forested tropics, a long lease to permit oil palm plantations means first cutting and selling the gallery rainforest (a lucrative business) to then plant oil palm.

Data on the scale, geographical distribution, trends, and players (both national and foreign) in large-scale land deals is generally unreliable (Vermeulen and Cotula, 2010). Acquisitions for conservation, tourism and logging are also hard to quantify (Fairhead, Leach, and Scoones, 2012; also see Zoomers, 2013). Even where data is available, the figures differ. For example: Oxfam (2011) states that Africa's land under acquisition is about 34 million hectares, about the size of Germany (see also Anseeuw et al., 2012). According to the Oakland Institute in 2009 alone, about 60 million hectares was leased or purchased in Africa (2011). More recently, Aubry et al. (2012: 3) claim that between 50 to 80 million hectares were acquired in the 'past few years'. Large land deals are not transparent and contracts are often kept secret (Holmen, 2015). Information often 'cannot be compared due to variations in (Scoones et al., 2013). Oya (2013) argues that most estimations are based on speculation, coming from media reports and a few more accurate investigations (Holmen, 2015). The most commonly used sources on large land deals are from the Land Matrix (an independent land monitoring initiative) and GRAIN, a small NGO supporting farmers. The Land Matrix crosschecks from a variety of sources. The latter is based on media reports. But this still does not guarantee that a deal is 'real' because 'activists and campaigning civil society organisations circulate a great deal of information among themselves and the same deal can be mentioned many times, thus making the risk of double counting obvious' (Holmen, 2015:461). Anseeuw et al. (2012) discovered that, although 134 million hectares has been reported as land grabbing, only 34 million hectares had been cross-referenced.

Not all of these investments have succeeded in the claims they make about what they will provide. Monoculture crops dominate most land under acquisition, and land most suitable for food crop production has been diverted to plantation tree crop production, including oil palm (Cotula and Vermeulen, 2009). Davis et al. (2014) estimated 8.2 million Africans were affected through lost income, and "poverty reduction is an unlikely result of large-scale land acquisitions". Job creation is minimal on mechanized plantations with a few wage laborers. In tropical Africa, large-scale land acquisitions survive at the expense of forest ecologies, and to the detriment

of forest-dependent communities (De Schutter, 2012), who unwillingly lose all or part of their land to investors.

III. METHODOLOGY

The cases were selected from the different regions of Uganda. The most in depth study was done on land grabbing in Kalangala for palm oil plantations where we have documented video testimonials and photos of the affected communities (available at www.foei.org/landgrab). Other cases related to carbon trading and natural forest destruction and the relation to livelihoods and access rights violations were also documented. The following methods were used to carry out this study: focus group discussions, photography, interviews, literature review (reports, direct observation, web, newspapers, publications, Government and other policy documents).

IV. DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Kalangala oil palm growing

Background to the project

In 1998, the Ugandan Government launched a Vegetable Oil Development Project (VODP), supported by the United Nations International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) and World Bank, to increase domestic production of vegetable oils in partnership with the private sector. This included the introduction of commercial oil palm production, as well as more traditional oil seed developments in eastern and Midwestern districts of Uganda (IFAD, 2011). The Kalangala oil palm project aims to plant 10,000 hectares of oil palm on Bugala Island in Kalangala district in Lake Victoria. Bugala Island is one of the 84 islands in Lake Victoria which make up Kalangala district. The island has a population of around 20,000 people, who mainly depended on fishing, subsistence farming and tourism before the introduction of oil palm. It is being taken forward by a partnership between the government and a private sector consortium, Oil Palm Uganda Limited (OPUL), formed in 2003. OPUL brings together foreign investment from:

- Global palm oil giant Wilmar International, one of the largest palm oil biodiesel manufacturers in the world. Wilmar has also benefitted from funding from the World Bank's private sector arm but has been implicated in illegally logging rainforests, setting forests on fire and violating the rights of local communities in Indonesia. (Friends of the Earth International, 2007)

- BIDCO, the largest manufacturer of vegetable oils, fats, soaps, margarine and protein concentrates in East and Central Africa. The Kalangala project also gets significant funding from the World Bank. In 2006, the Kalangala Oil Palm Growers Trust (KOPGT), an association of local farmers, was established with support from IFAD, in order to promote local smallholder involvement in the palm oil project, joined the partnership, taking on a 10% holding in 2009 (IFAD, 2010; NAPE, 2011).

As well as increasing domestic production of vegetable oil, the project was designed to improve the infrastructure on the island, increase rural incomes and reduce poverty levels, attract private sector investment and to stimulate economic development in the area (IFAD, 2010; NAPE 2011). Local farmers were seen as important partners, with 3500 ha of the total 10,000 ha designated for out-growers and small holders. The rest would be managed by the nucleus estate (Kalangala District NGO Forum, 2009).

The settlement of oil manufacturers in Kalangala district result into following effects both to people and environment.

Violation of Land Rights

Under the terms of the agreement, the 6,500 ha of land for the oil palm estate on Bugala was to be provided by the Government. While most of this land has been provided to BIDCO, this has been at the expense of members of the community who did not hold formal land rights to the land they occupied – often Mailo land, which is now officially recognised as public land; and at the expense of forests and the lakeshore buffer zone. (Kalangala District NGO Forum, 2009). The remaining 3,500 ha was allocated to smallholders and out-growers, of which 2,000 ha had been acquired by 2009 (NAPE, 2011). Land conflicts have arisen between members of the local community and BIDCO, following the allocation of land for the oil palm development, with reports of people being evicted from their homes in the forest to make way for oil palm. (NAPE, 2011).

Because few rural dwellers hold official land titles for the land they lived on, they often cannot seek redress. Under the Constitution land tribunals are supposed to resolve land conflicts (Article 243) but these operated for only a short time before collapsing. Later the tribunals were supposed to be replaced with Land Committees in the districts, but these have not yet become fully operational. As a result there is little to prevent land grabbing, and indeed the government has appeared to sanction the process, giving land occupied under customary tenure to foreign investors.

Some small holders have also said that they were effectively forced to sell land they owned after planting oil palm because they were not able to pay for the fertilizer and other inputs needed. With no income from

Access to energy

Because large areas of forest have been cleared to make way for oil palm plantations, there is pressure on the remaining forest resources, which traditionally provide building materials, boat-making materials, food and importantly, firewood for the local population. (Kalangala District NGO Forum, 2009)

Employment

One of the stated aims of the oil palm development was to create jobs for the local community (IFAD, 2009; NAPE, 2011), but most of the jobs on offer are for casual labourers

and most are not from Kalangala. Many come from the Northern and Eastern parts of Uganda. Virtually all of these are men. Casual labourers are paid approximately one dollar a day for work on the project, and many say this is not enough to cover their living costs in Kalangala. As a result, there is a rapid turnover of casual staff, with casual workers remaining at the project for just three months (Kalangala District NGO Forum, 2009) Living conditions for the casual labourers in the BIDCO workers' quarters are overcrowded, with nine workers allocated to two rooms (Kalangala District NGO Forum, 2009).

Many local people say that they can earn a better living fishing and prefer to do that, rather than work as labourers (Kalangala District NGO Forum, 2009) There are complaints from the local community of thefts of food crops and other items, with casual laborers being blamed. NAPE attempted to establish whether any local people were employed by BIDCO as officers at the plantation, but did not receive an answer. Similarly we were unable to establish from BIDCO managers how local farmers have been involved in the project.

Sudden rise in the price of land

As a result of the increased demand for land on Bugala Island, land prices have increased considerably, from 70,000 shillings an acre in 2003 to between 800,000- 2 million shillings in 2009. (Kalangala District NGO Forum, 2009) This increase in prices has attracted rich investors, encouraging poorer land owners to sell up. Some land owners who have refused to sell have found that oil palm has been planted on their land anyway, making it difficult for them to continue farming. (Box 3). More than 20 families found themselves homeless as a result of oil palm plantation establishments (NAPE 2011), and it was reported *"Those who refuse to sell, oil palm is planted to zero them off. The victim finds it difficult to graze animals or have access to water for animals. Eventually one has to give in"* (community members)

Destruction of local economy

The introduction of oil palm has affected the local economy, which used to be based around fishing, timber harvesting and food crops. With land previously used for food now planted with oil palm, local food supplies have been reduced, and farmers who have lost access to their land have also lost their income. This has increased food insecurity. Increased pressure on land and on forest products has pushed up prices – temporarily benefitting small landowners who have sold out – but ultimately increasing the cost of living for the local community. These changes in land use have increased poverty for some, resulting in an increase in crime and conflicts within the community. Members of the local communities around the shores of Lake Victoria used to derive their livelihoods from fishing, catching haplochromines, tilapia, Nile perch and lung fish.

However, these fish have become more scarce, possibly as a result of pollution from the agrochemicals used on the plantation.

Women have been most affected by the collapse of the local economy and have organized themselves in small groups to offer advice to one another, working together to resolve family and community conflicts (Sheikh Mayanja, pers. Comm).

Food insecurity

People living on Bugala Island used to grow beans, yams, peas, maize, and bananas and some of these crops were used to supply food to neighboring islands. But the island now has to import almost all its supplies of bananas, rice, beans and maize flour from the main land (Kalangala District Local Government, 2005).

This has led to an increase in living costs for the people on the island, making it difficult for some members of the community to be able to feed themselves. Many have now realised the links between deforestation, oil palm cultivation, environmental damage and food production (Box 4 and Box 6), it was reported that *"We consider food as the basic and first line of security for our members and the Country, and our primary demand in regard to biofuels is that Government hastens the policy and regulation of biofuels. We consider as unsustainable actions that mean degazettement and destruction of forests for planting oil palm or sugar cane"* (the Secretary General of the Uganda National Chamber of Commerce and Industry). Bugala Island was an important cultural site for Uganda's traditional Buganda Kingdom. Resources from the "Lugo Forest" on the island play an important role in Buganda traditions and customs. But much of the forest, and other sacred sites have been destroyed as a result of the oil palm plantations, contravening a stipulation that sacred sites, ritual sites, tombs and cemeteries could not be used. (Kalangala District NGO Forum, 2009) Only a small patch of Lugo forest remains. This loss of culturally significant sites prevents the continuation of traditional rituals for local people. The growing number of migrants on the island also has an impact, adding to the cultural diversity, and contributing to the gradual loss of the area's distinct cultural heritage. (Kalangala District NGO Forum, 2009)

V. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Land grabbing has very real consequences on real people, land, and industries. However, looking into historical examples facts in our nation about the similar issues even in our community helps to give deeper understanding to how and why land grabbing has become such a phenomenon. The case of the Kalangala district in Uganda is just one example of the new world of popular land grabbing that is rooted in our nation.

Africa's position in the current, globalized world is sometimes argued over by scholars, but many do believe that it is relatively understudied and has been largely defined by exclusion and marginalization. However, in recent years the US and other countries have become more dependant on countries in Africa for oil and other goods. The US military

has been giving more prominence to West Africa in strategic planning. These developments point to a shift in the marginalization of African countries by the rest of the world. These circumstances challenge Africa's place in the global economy. According to the scholar James Ferguson, this shifts allows an opportunity for some capital investment even if the business opportunity is surrounded by some political contexts that "conventionally considered to discourage it."

It is every community's vision to develop to greater heights and to have a positive impact on the livelihood of its individuals. Land acquired for the production of food etc., can be of great impact to everyone involved. Nevertheless, there cannot be an absolute of everything hence; there will be dire consequences one way or the other. In view of that, there can be some measures put in place for the protection and safe guarding of the asset; land, owned by the community.

There should be institutional policies to guard the transactional aspect on land especially with foreign companies; the terms and conditions regarding should be documented and explained to all parties involved, particularly, the chiefs and the local people (Yaro, 2013). There should be a mechanism in place that allows for periodic monitoring and evaluation of the activities of the companies to ascertain whether they are in line with the agreed terms of the contract.

The main advantage that a community stands to benefit is the fulfilment of the agreed corporate social responsibility attached to the investment made on their lands; there should be an enforcement concerning this responsibility so as to give back to the community. The community should also respect the terms of the contract and fulfil their inputs as pledged in the contract.

The government has to come up with strict laws that govern investors and they should make sure that they enforce to make citizen happy.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Interview guide/Group discussion guide

1. Do you know of any projects involved in buying big chunks of land in this area?
2. Are there public forest reserves that have been given away to the farms?
3. Was government involved? If so how?
4. Was the local government involved and if so how?
5. Are you also among those who were evicted, lost or sold land?
6. If yes, how big was the land?
7. Do you know of any other person that was been affected by the eviction?
8. How are they affected by the ongoing projects?