

COUNTRY PROFILE FOR INTEGRATED ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT IN UGANDA



National Environment Management Authority

1. Background

Over the last 15 years, Uganda has achieved spectacular economic growth, thanks to the introduction of an enabling macro-economic environment and political stability. However, this economic growth has only recently manifested itself due to the fact that tremendous damage was done in the 1970s and early 1980s. Many Ugandans are still confronted with poverty, hunger, ill health and illiteracy, and a continuing deterioration of the ecosystems on which the country's largely rural population depends.

Aware of these paradoxes and contradictions inherent in the development process, the Government of Uganda has gone ahead to institute measures that can reverse the trends. This is more evident, especially in the legislative and institutional arrangement that were made between 1992 and 2002.

All these efforts and others; point to the government's appreciation to take a balanced and integrated approach to environment and development questions in the context of sustainable development. Within the framework of this report, sustainable development is seen to entail integration of economic, social and environmental objectives and the choice among them where it's possible.

On the other hand, the term environment in the context of the guidelines is viewed as a complex dynamic system with many interacting components. In order to successfully implement any strategy for the protection and management of the environment, the different components, their interactions and relationships need to be understood.

One of the means to develop this understanding is through State of the Environment Reports (SOERs). State of the environment reporting is a systematic acquisition, analysis and presentation of information on environmental conditions. SOERs are meant to provide baseline information especially in their first editions. SOERs should be both intellectually stimulating yet simple. Potential users include scientists, resource managers, politicians, policy and decision makers, community extension workers, NGOs and CBOs, the private sector and community groups. State of Environment Reporting is

a communication tool used to monitor and assess changes in the environment and provide information necessary to put in place “best practices” to manage the environment. SOE dates back to the late 1960’s and its origins are linked to the introduction in 1969 of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) in the United States. The 1972 UN Conference on the Human Environment in Stockholm put SOE reporting on the international agenda.

2. Rationale for State of the Environment Reporting in Uganda

The National Environment Act, Cap 153, 1995 in Uganda requires that the National Environment Management Authority (NEMA) produces National State of Environment Reports biannually. The same law requires the Districts produce their District State of Environment reports annually. These reports can be used to measure government’s or local governments commitment to sustainability. Policy analysis from these reports can be used to promote environmental accountability, reflecting broad consensus on major environmental problems.

The National Environment Management Authority (NEMA) has the mandate to coordinate, supervise and monitor all matters on the environment in Uganda. To support this mandate, one of the functions of NEMA is to generate information and disseminate it to create awareness and guide planning for sustainable use of natural resources. Among the key issues NEMA has been involved in the production of the National State of Environment report and aiding districts to produce their District State of Environment reports.

2.0 Status of environmental reporting in Uganda

After the 1992 Earth Summit, Uganda committed itself on the principles of sustainable development. By 1994, the National Environment Action Plan was in place which saw the development of the National Environment Management Policy 1994. One of the tasks spelt out in the Policy was to provide for an effective management system to facilitate the collection, storage, analysis and dissemination of environment information among others. The National Environment Management Policy, 1994 enabled the

formulation of the National Environment Act, 1995. In Section 7, subsection 1 of the Act, one of the functions of the National Environment Management Authority (NEMA) is to prepare and disseminate a National State of Environment report once in every two years. Districts are also mandated under this same law to produce District state of Environment reports (DSOERs) annually. Uganda has had five editions of the National State of Environment reports produced in 1994, 1996, 1998, 2000 and 2002. The 2004 report was delayed because of circumstances beyond NEMA's control but it will be launched soon.

The first DSOER's were prepared in 1997 when the country had 30 districts. This process suffered a set back because of various reasons being lack of technical staff at the districts to undertake this activity. However, with the formation of the District Environment office this activity has taken route. All the 56 districts produced their 2004 DSOERs with assistance from NEMA. Presently there are 71 districts hence more challenges on building capacity in environmental reporting.

The purpose of these reports at whatever level of management are:

- to inform the public about the state of the environment in the country including the importance of resources and their value to society;
- to indicate key trends and projections and opportunities for improvement;
- to provide an accurate and useful reference document for those interested in environmental and natural resource issue.

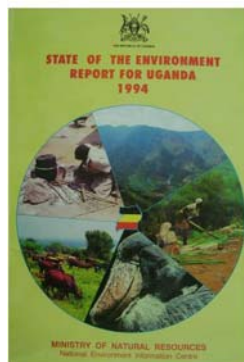
The reports so far developed have greatly supported the purpose and caused informed decisions and policies to be enacted. The 1994 National State of environment report was mainly taking stock of environmental goods and services of the country. This gave a baseline of the natural resources at that time. By 1996 a new constitution was in place and decentralization of environmental management was underway. The effects of a

growing and expanding economy were reflected in the 1996 report. Among the key environmental problems and the drivers listed were the degradation of fragile ecosystems such as wetlands, mountains, river banks and lake shores. This report also listed the drivers such as the land tenure and lack of a land use planning as some of the key issues contributing to environmental degradation. Beginning 1998, many of the problems predicted in the 1996 reports were manifested in disasters in mountainous areas, increased loss from soil erosion, conflicts in the wetlands and many others.

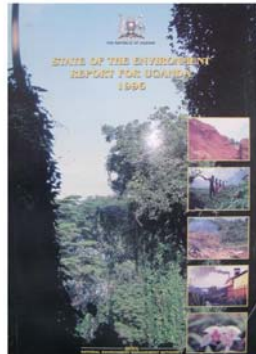
The 2000, 2002, 2004/05 and 2006/07 reports have been warning on the declining per capita arable land because of the increasing population. This calls for an urgent need to continuously review and refocus the country's development strategy so as to bring about the overall goal of sustainable development as is pursued by Government.

Environmental reporting requires learning both from individuals such as professionals and organizations. Individuals from different disciplines, organizations, or more broadly, different social interests, may also have different though equally legitimate views on the environment and the economy that they can bring into the reporting activity. The SOER reporting process should therefore encourage wide participation, and should seek an early commitment from others to help see the process through to the end.

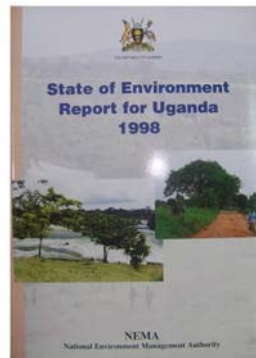
The 1st National State of Environment Report was published in 1994 and this report took stock of the environmental goods and services in the country.



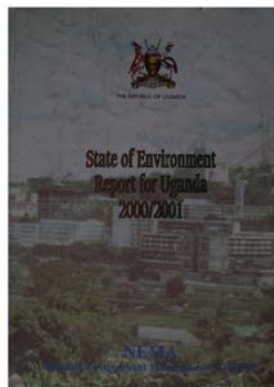
The 1996 report analyzed the effects of a growing economy with respect to decentralization and the 1995 National Constitution.



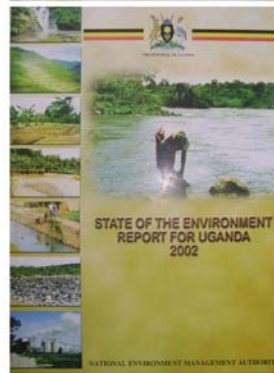
The 1998 report focused on the stresses on the natural and environmental resources in view of the rapid economic growth of the late 1990's.



The 2000/01 report addressed the implications of the Poverty Eradication Action Plan II (PEAP II) and Plan for Modernization of Agriculture (PMA) on the environment.



The 2002 report focused on the principles of sustainable development and the relationship between the environment and poverty. This edition discussed Uganda's future outlook through modeling and scenario building.



The 2004/05 report focuses on the drivers of environmental change, the ensuing pressures, the impacts caused and the responses adopted within an overall poverty-environment interlinkages framework.



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