

# EUROPEAN POPULATION CONFERENCE 2010

## Call for Abstracts

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**TOPIC: DEVELOPMENT AND ENVIRONMENT**

**SUB TOPIC:** Natural resources utilization, population growth and the environment (Mt. Elgon study)

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### Introduction

This paper is presented as a result of the findings of Busiu Development Foundation, a charity organisation that has been implementing natural resources management and Health projects in Mbale District in Uganda and has collected findings over a period of seven years of working with communities through situational analyses, communitywide meetings, focus group discussions, networking and onsite analysis. The paper presents a true picture of what is in our communities around the Mount Elgon region in eastern Uganda. It is presented under three major headings; the situation, sustainable approaches and conclusion.

### The situation

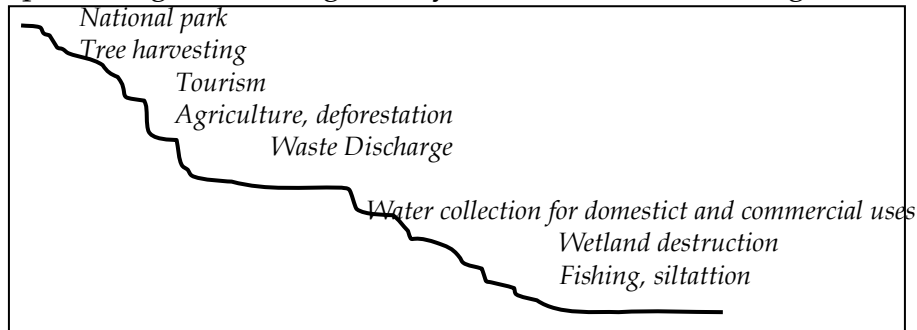
Communities around Mt. Elgon region and along R. Manafwa have high population pressures (greater than National average of 3.2%), which is leading to land degradation, bio diversity loss, increased man activities along the river and Mt. Elgon causing floods, landslides and as well outbreak of diseases. As a result, lives, infrastructure and property are lost, an obstacle to development.

Floods and landslides affect sanitation where latrines and water sources are either flooded or washes. According to UN - OCHA (WASH Update 21 September 2007), over 300,000 people were severely affected by the floods. Sironko and Bududa districts are among the most affected in the Elgon region. Recent rapid public health assessments conducted by Oxfam GB indicated that a total of 81,274 persons have been severely affected by floods in the two districts. The major public health concern is the contamination of drinking water sources and damage of flooding water to water supply systems & latrines.

Population pressure has an impact on Climatic change which is affecting the Environment Globally. Population growth also has an impact on Water resource management, a big challenge in most developing nations and yet water is life for Humans, plants, basic to hygiene and our daily life and as well a source of power. Water is a base for development like agriculture and economic growth. Water brings about Jobs, education, Environmental sustainability and as well improving Health.

Mt. Elgon region in Eastern Uganda Experiences disasters in form of floods, landslides diseases and drought linked to a growing population with poor natural resources managent. Yet another factor is 90% of the population use charcoal and wood as a source of fuel.

River Manafwa that originates from Mt. elgon has the following pressing activities due to population growth along its way as illustrated in the Diagram below:



Water for agricultural production has not been well developed because the needs of domestic water for the population have not been met and yet climatic change is at the onset globally. There also exist poor coordination of stakeholder in population and environment. Communities still access water from streams and farming activities at the riverbank as seen below.



*Recent population growth has been responsible for the steady increase in the number of countries classified as experiencing scarcity in per capita availability of cropland, or in per capita availability of renewable freshwater. (PAI\_ security demographic)*

## **Sustainable approaches**

- a) Identify gaps in sustainable natural resources management at all levels and draw mitigation strategies for development.
- b) Create stakeholders learning and sharing of environment and population information to create a platform for change in natural resources utilization.
- c) Create enabling Environment for inclusive decision making by all stakeholders and categories of community members (women, children, disabled, HIV/AIDS affected, the elderly and the youth) in health and Environment issues.
- d) Promote communities utilize natural resources and awareness of the negative effects of poor natural resources management and the positive effects of proper natural resources utilization.
- e) Fill gaps and weaknesses in linking population and Environment that exist where real and potential opportunities can emerge for development.

Key opportunities for mitigation:

- Population Health and Environment (PHE) website for sharing information and population reference Bureau PRB.
- Existence of Climatic change action Networks.

## **Conclusion**

Integration in sustainable development creates a great link of issues in environment, Health, Governance, gender.