

Participatory land use planning in Ngogwe subcounty— Empowering communities for sustainable development

The envisaged introduction of oil palm cultivation as part of the Uganda National Oil Palm Project (NOPP) in Ngogwe subcounty, Buikwe district, will reduce the arable land available for community use and increase the existing pressures on the local environment. This proposal for the district leaves local communities with hard choices about how to meet their needs from the remaining land. Ecological Trends Alliance, supported by Tropenbos International, worked with the six parishes that make up Ngogwe subcounty to achieve food security and sustainable land management through a new land use plan. This was developed through dialogue and participatory processes with communities in each parish to ensure that the plan promoted inclusive decision making and monitoring. This infobrief presents the vision, goal and objectives identified by the communities to move the subcounty towards more sustainable land use, and outlines the main issues and recommendations to address these challenges.

Recommendations

for Buikwe District government

- Use the land use plan to build partnerships with development agencies and cultural institutions, encourage them to align activities with the plan, that support sustainable development in the subcounty.
- Encourage communities to adopt and implement the plan, respect bylaws, and pay local taxes, so local revenue can be returned to fund other components of the land use plan for community benefits.
- Include the activities in the land use plan into subcounty and district annual plans, so they can better align with the national development legal framework and qualify for funding from money received by the district.

for the Ministry of Agriculture

- Put local communities at the centre of the design and implementation of land use plans, as the only way to use optimal land planning that supports local livelihoods and protects the environment.
- Incentivize Oil Palm Uganda Ltd (OPUL) to apply its corporate social responsibility strategies to fund activities that support local land use plans and the restoration of forests and wetlands.
- Encourage a fair distribution of land resources between the oil palm industry and local smallholders and make efforts to diversify livelihoods to guarantee the long-term prosperity of residents.

“The vision of Ngogwe is to be a prosperous, food secure and development oriented subcounty sustainably managing its natural resources for the future generation”

The need for land use planning

The Ngogwe subcounty has experienced persistent land use change, as it has been heavily cleared for agriculture. If not adequately planned for, the proposed introduction of oil palm in the subcounty will introduce yet another pressure on land that will impact negatively local food production and natural resources. As such, improved land use planning is needed to better integrate the needs of all local people into the future of the subcounty, guaranteeing food security and protecting the environment. The land use plan summarized here is the result of a truly participatory planning process carried out by the six parishes that make up the subcounty, Ddungu, Kikwayi, Kiringo, Lubongo, Namulesa and Ndolwa, which were then synthesized to elaborate the Ngogwe subcounty plan.

Community concerns

From the wide range of issues identified in each parish during planning, the most common problems were: poor farming methods, deforestation, soil erosion, land conflicts, poor road networks and unsafe water.

Current land use

The different land uses in Ngogwe were defined and mapped in all six parishes, leading to the current land use map (below), the most relevant for planning being:

Forests. Tropical high forest in different stock levels, located in protected areas and private lands.

Woodland. Located in the steep slopes in the southern part of the subcounty.

Agricultural land. Most of the available land in the subcounty is under subsistence farmland which is intercropped, except sugarcane which is cultivated as a monocrop.

Settlements. Mostly along roads on the northern side of the subcounty.

Grasslands. Scattered patches of grassland across the subcounty.

Open water. The eastern and south-western side of the subcounty are covered by Lake Victoria waters, used as a water source for households and fishing.

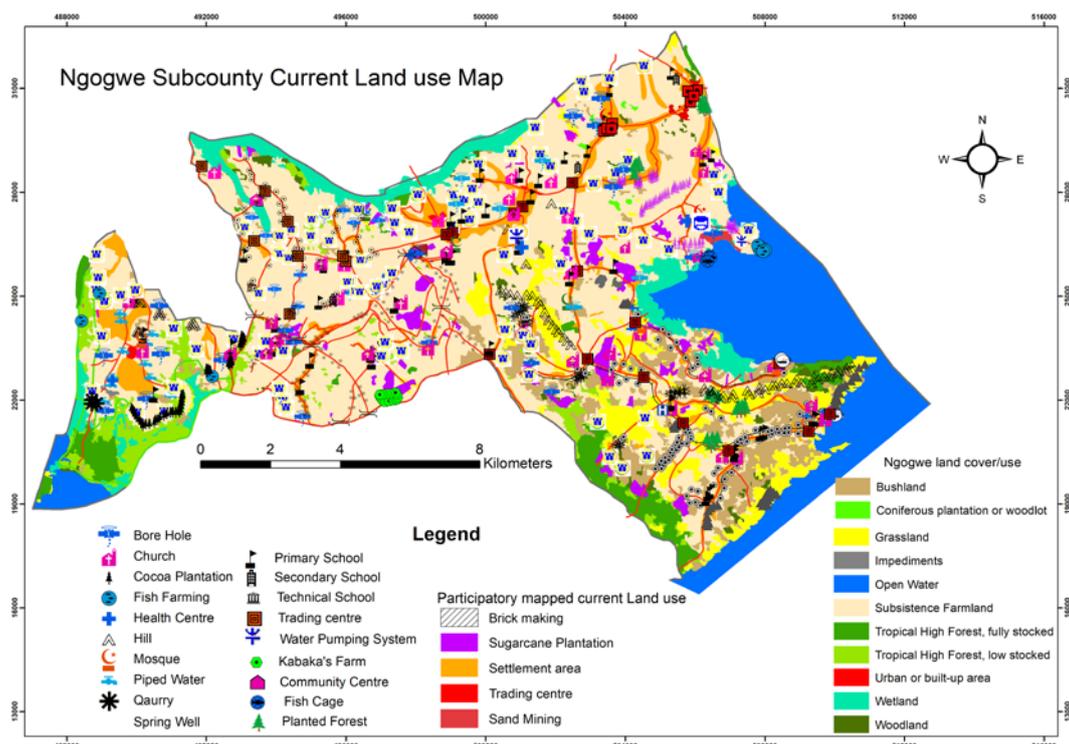
Wetlands. Often degraded, located on the lake shores and northern part of the subcounty.

Urban areas. Highly populated areas and business centres mostly located along the highways

Aims of the land use plan

These were agreed after close consultation with communities in all parishes, to reflect their priorities and respond to their most pressing land use issues.

The goal. The goal is to improve the land productivity in Ngogwe subcounty for sustainable development, and specifically to improve forest cover, crop and livestock



Map 1. Current land use map

production, infrastructure and promote agricultural produce processing for enhanced income generation.

Objectives. To (i) address the problem of poor farming practices, (ii) restore forest cover, (iii) reduce pests and diseases prevalence (iv) restore wetlands and use them sustainably, and (v) market agricultural produce.

Taking action

The parishes and their leaders developed an action plan to guide them on the interventions to take, to tackle the problems identified and to reach their agreed objectives. The plan also includes the resources needed and the responsibilities of each stakeholder for the implementation of the plan. Specific actions for each parish were outlined in subsequent parish level plans. The Ngogwe subcounty plan included the following actions.

Agriculture. Train communities in sustainable land management, planting trees, cover crops and mulching, increasing the number of model farms and demonstration gardens, establishing irrigation schemes, and strengthening farmer cooperatives.

Crop and livestock pests and diseases. Improve pastures, treat and dip animals, organize sensitization meetings, buy better animal breeds, provision of grain silos.

Forests. Train communities in agroforestry especially in the practices of boundary and on-farm tree planting, and establish a tree nursery.

Wetlands. Develop bylaws, categorize wetlands to guide agricultural activities, allow natural regeneration and plant wetland trees at degraded sites.

Roads. Build new roads, repair existing roads and bridges, regular road maintenance, construction of water trenches along the roads, and addition of road signs.

Access to clean water. Empower water and environment committees, sensitization meetings, drilling and construction of water tanks, repair boreholes, and harvest rainwater

Future land use

The map (below) shows a futuristic impression of the land use in Ngogwe, which will only be achieved by an effective implementation of the activities proposed in the action plan.

Oil palm. In designated areas, land acquired for oil palm plantations will be planted as a monoculture crop. Some areas under sugarcane could be converted into oil palm if considered more profitable by farmers.

Forests. After restoration, continuous forest cover will be found in protected areas. Restored areas previously degraded and additional tree cover on farms as woodlots or agroforestry.

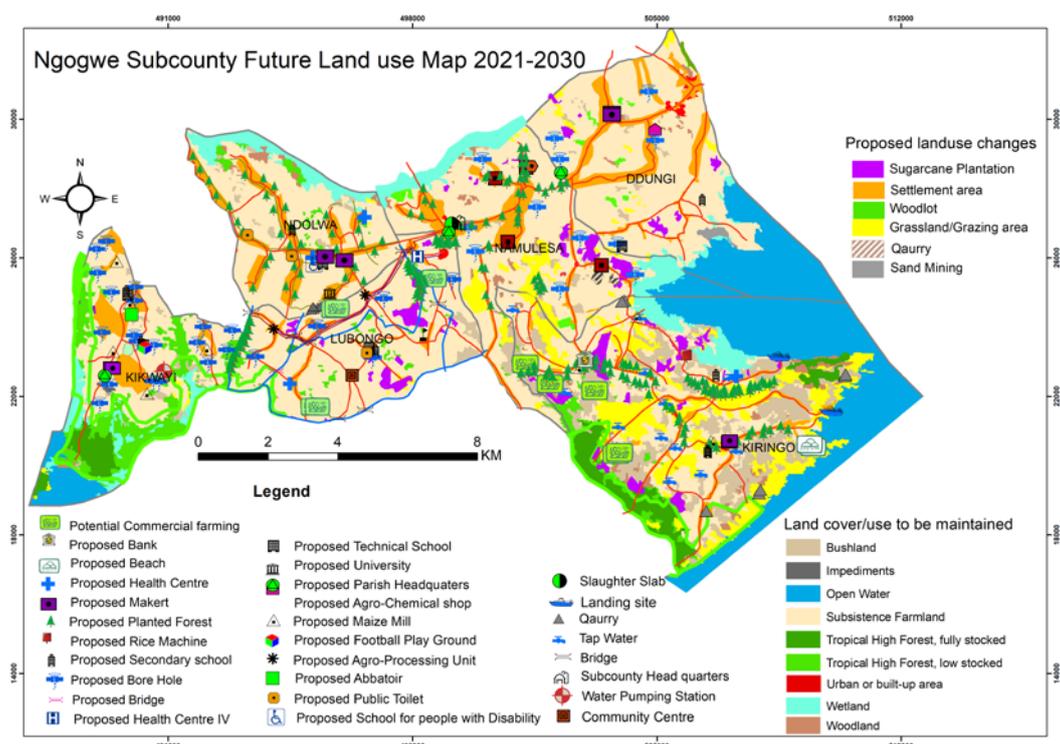
Subsistence farming. Improved farmland and increased crop yields through better farming methods, agroforestry, better access to extension services and finance, and more intensive, mechanized agriculture. Additional settlements will not be encouraged.

Settlement and subsistence farming. Settlement expansion will be incentivized to occur in these areas only, to leave other land for agriculture.

Wetlands. Once restored, they will also be better protected by enforcing bylaws and statutory requirements.

Settlements. Better defined limits to prevent further fragmentation of agricultural land.

Infrastructure. New agrochemical shop, agro-processing unit, piped water, boreholes, landing site, health centre and schools.



Map 2. Future land use map

Expected outcomes

The Ngogwe land use plan aims to increase the prosperity of the subcounty's population through more sustainable management of natural resources and improved agricultural practices. Implementing the plan will lead to increased land and livestock productivity, food availability, control of crop and animal pests and diseases and improved household livelihoods and income. Environmental protection will also be improved in Ngogwe, as well as health and education services. The process has also improved inclusive decision making and local governance.

Working together

As described in the action plan, putting the land use plan into practice requires commitment and collaboration from every stakeholder. From the local community to the District Council, people agreed to be assigned different roles and responsibilities to ensure that planned activities are implemented in a timely and effective manner, with progress also being adequately monitored against agreed indicators. Elaborating the land use plan shows that placing local communities at the centre of planning revealed valuable insights to better achieve an optimal and equitable use of land within Ngogwe subcounty.

Methodology

This land use plan was developed using participatory land use planning. This is a systematic process, taking into consideration national level guidance, but mainly engaging local community stakeholders.

1. **Preplanning.** Collect biophysical and social data, prepare base maps and draft land use/ cover maps.
2. **Community dialogue.** Develop a common vision, set goals, and agree an action plan to tackle the identified land use issues.
3. **Brainstorming.** Identify problems, coping strategies and solutions through community group discussions, and draw up current and future land use maps.
4. **Transect walks.** Visit as a group the problematic sites and sites for future development, taking GPS readings at each.
5. **Elaborating the plan.** Use official government maps to demarcate the community maps and combine parish plans into a subcounty level plan

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