

THE ENVIRONMENTAL FALLOUT OF U.S AID CUTS

UGANDA'S EXAMPLE

By Robert Bagyenda, Email: leonoleh@gmail.com

ABOUT UGANDA

- Total area 241,551 square kilometers – almost the size of Oregon state!
- Diverse landscape - snow-capped Rwenzori Mountains and the large Lake Victoria.
- Its abundant wildlife includes chimpanzees (approx.5k in #, with about 1/3 in Kibale National Park) and rare birds.
- Bwindi Impenetrable and Mgahinga National Parks are renowned mountain gorilla habitats. Total # about 480 (about 1/2 of the world's total mountain gorilla population).
- Agriculture and nature-based tourism are major foreign exchange earners
- Total population 50 million, rapid population growth rate (3% p.a.), exerting pressure on natural resources

NATURE-BASED TOURISM



Biggest # of tourists
from the U.S

NATURE-BASED TOURISM



U.S AID CUTS

- Annually received about \$7 million in environment and climate USG funding
- Had built a close to \$45 million environment and climate portfolio
- Examples of projects under the Portfolio:
 - The \$34 million USAID/Biodiversity for resilience project
 - \$5 million USAID/FtF Climate-Smart Agriculture project
 - \$2.5 million USAID/Uganda biodiversity fund project
 - Were designing a follow-on project that would help address the environmental impacts of the new oil and gas industry, and address zoonotic diseases

The funding was zeroed out! **Everything just stopped!**

EFFECTS OF PROGRAM SHUTDOWNS

- All USG-funded environment and climate initiatives closed. Contractors received stop work orders in January 2025.
- Forests and biodiversity are more prone to degradation and loss
- People, households and communities missed an opportunity to build their capacity to adapt to the impacts of climate change, and lost income and livelihood opportunities
- The people, households and communities are more prone to climate-related diseases like malaria and zoonotic diseases
- Impacts on tourism, agriculture, food security and nutrition, and associated income losses. Tourism annually brings about \$1.2bn in forex, and over 650k jobs
- Migration and risk of youth recruitment into subversive activities

SOME STATS

- In 2020, Uganda had **2.4 Mha of natural forest**, covering over 10% of its land area.
- In 2024, it lost approximately **32,000 ha of natural forest**, which resulted in an estimated **16 Mt of CO₂ emissions** (Global forest watch)
- Inaction on climate change could be 20 times more expensive than adapting (CDKN, 2015).
- Continuation of current development practices without climate action could lead to a loss of over 70% of Uganda's GDP by 2050 (CDKN, 2015).

MOVING FORWARD

- Push for local/internal funding for biodiversity conservation and climate change adaptation and mitigation
- Advocate for renewed external support. Biodiversity loss and climate change are international development challenges. They affect us all.
- Integrated population and environment programming

Thank you for listening!

