

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

The envisaged introduction of oil palm cultivation as part of the Uganda National Oil Palm Project (NOPP) in Kityerera subcounty, Mayuge 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 Kityerera 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 Mayuge 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 Kityerera is to be a prosperous subcounty that embraces environmental protection, sustainable management of natural resources for poverty eradication and infrastructural development”

The need for land use planning

Land allocation for oil palm cultivation is planned to take place in Kityerera subcounty, which will reduce available land for local food production and increase existing pressures over natural resources. As such, improved land use planning is needed to better integrate the needs of all local people before the introduction of oil palm cultivation, 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, Kityerera, Wandegeya, Bubinge, Bukalenzi, Ndaiga and Kitovu, which were then synthesized to elaborate the Kityerera subcounty Plan. The planning process was aimed at promoting effective decision making on sustainable land use in the area as well as initiating and monitoring its implementation by the communities themselves.

Community concerns

From the wide range of issues identified in each parish during planning, the most common problems were: poor farming methods, unplanned settlements, animal and crop pests and diseases, poor fishing methods, and under developed infrastructure.

Current land use

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

Forest. There is one depleted forest reserve. No forests left outside the reserve.

Agricultural land. Most of the available land in the subcounty is under subsistence farmland with intercropping, except sugarcane and rice, which are cultivated with monocropping.

Settlements. Mostly located along roads and landing sites. The southern and western side of the subcounty are the most settled.

Open water. The western and south-western boundaries are covered by Lake Victoria waters, used as water source for households and fishing.

Wetlands. Often degraded or depleted, located on the southern and western side of the subcounty.

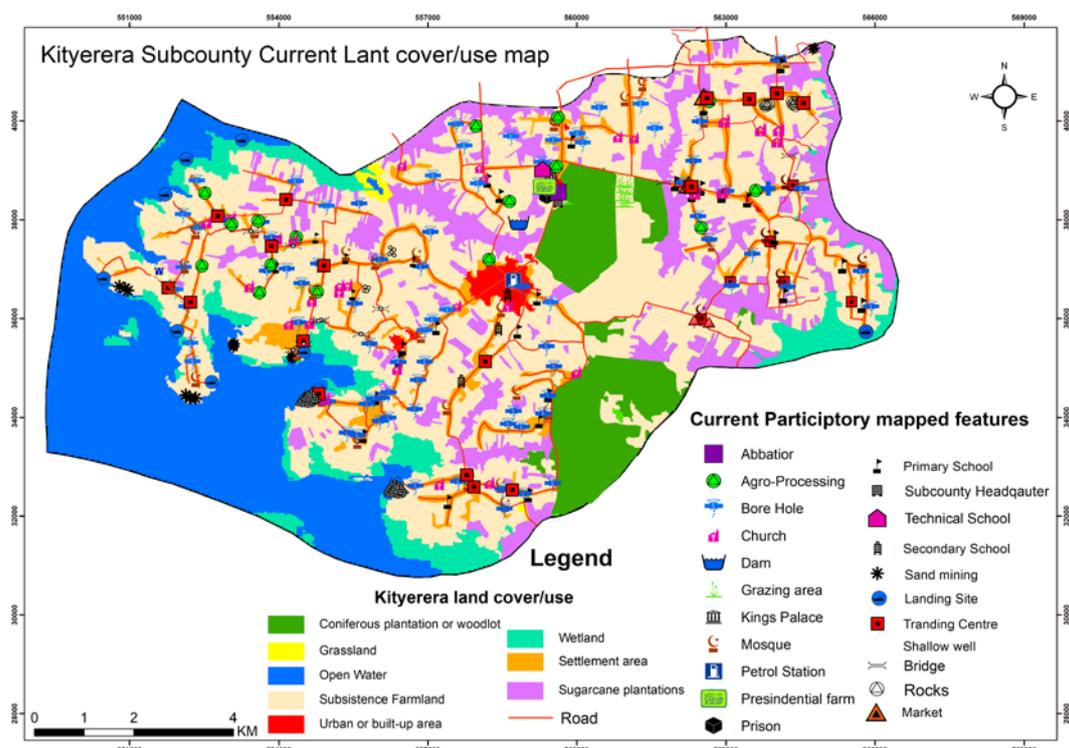
Urban areas. One major town in the centre of the subcounty and other built-up areas at road junctions.

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. Increased the land productivity in Kityerera subcounty for sustainable development, and specifically to improve crop and livestock production, and environment protection for improved living standards.

Objectives. To (i) address the problem of poor farming practices and crop diseases, (ii) encourage tree planting to address excessive wind, drought and deforestation, (iii)



Map 1. Current land use map

address the issue of animal diseases, (iv) restore wetlands and use them sustainably, and (v) improve infrastructure.

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 Kityerera subcounty plan included the following actions.

Agriculture. Train communities in sustainable land management, plant cover crops and trees, setup demonstration gardens, practice mulching, introduce other crops other than sugar cane, set irrigation scheme, provision of grain silos, and formation of farmer cooperatives.

Animal diseases. Improve pastures, treat and dip animals, organize sensitization meetings.

Forests. Train communities in agroforestry to practice 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.

Infrastructure. Improve maintenance of existing infrastructure, community lobbying for infrastructure, installation of road tolls for trucks, construction of road drainage system, and tree planting along roads.

Future land use

The map (below) shows a futuristic impression of the land use in Kityerera, 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 area as a coniferous plantation. Additional tree cover along roads, and on farms as woodlots or agroforestry.

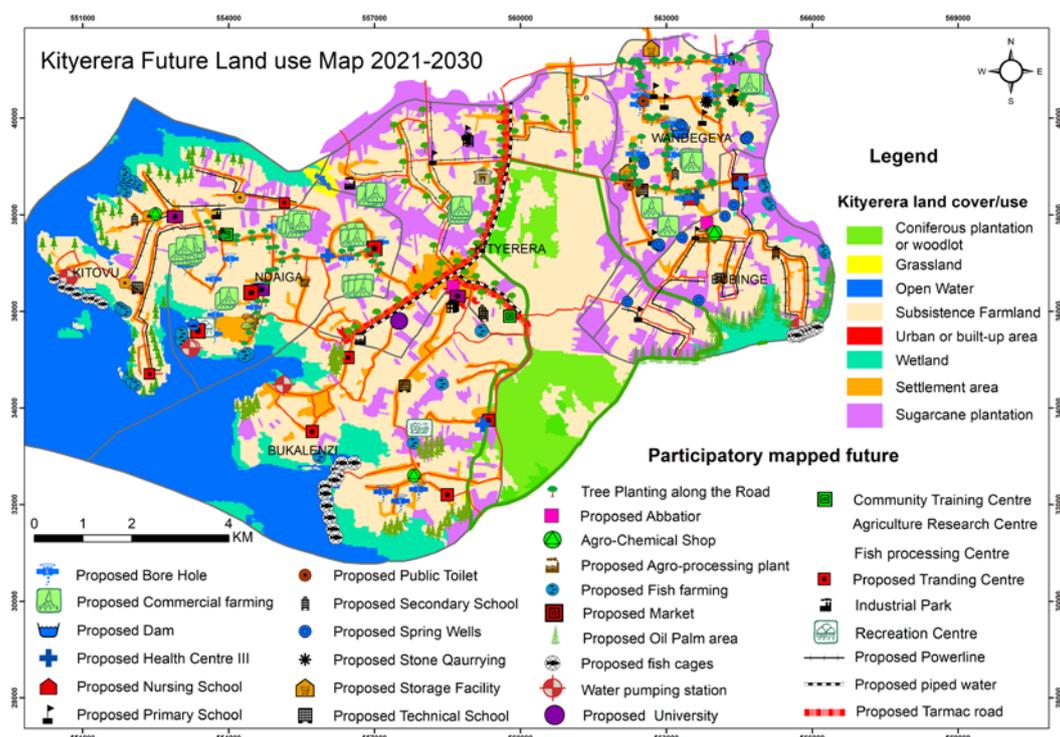
Subsistence farming. Improved farmland and increased crop yields through better farming methods, agroforestry and better access to extension services and finance. More intensive, mechanized agriculture. Additional settlements will not be encouraged.

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

Sugarcane plantation. It is envisaged that sugarcane, which is grown in every parish, will persist into the future.

Wetlands. Once restored, they will also be better protected by enforcing bylaws and statutory requirements. Settlements. With better defined limits to prevent further fragmentation of agricultural land.

Infrastructure developments. Proposed agrochemical shops, an agro-processing plant, health centres, schools, a training centre, an agriculture research centre, boreholes and markets in place.



Map 2. Future land use map

Expected outcomes

The Kityerera 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 pests and diseases and household income, and improved livelihoods and veterinary and extension services. Environmental protection will also be improved in Kityerera, 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 Kityerera 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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