

## Field Report<sup>1</sup>

### *Topic: LARGE SCALE COMMERCIAL AGRICULTURE: Implications of Sugarcane Growing and Food Security in Kamuli District*



**People's Parliament Session at Bugabula Guest House, Kamuli District**

**(February 2015)**

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## 1.0 Introduction

Kamuli district originally known as Bugabula district was carved out of Busoga district in 1974. This was later named North Busoga district in 1975, and then the present day Kamuli district. The district lies at an average altitude of 1,083 m above sea level and extends from 00 - 56' North / 330 - 05' East up to 010 - 20' North / 330 - 15' East. Kamuli District is bordered by River Nile and Kayunga District in the west, Jinja district in the South, Iganga district in the Southeast, Kaliro District in the East, and Lake Kyoga in the north. It has a total land area of 3,443.62 km<sup>2</sup> and 835.12 km<sup>2</sup> (23%) of water<sup>2</sup>.

Over 80% of the population depends on agriculture for their livelihood. The average land holding is 1.0 ha per farm family. It has a total land area of 1,622.00 km<sup>2</sup> and 62.64 km<sup>2</sup> (3.9%) of water. Historical background Kamuli District, Kamuli district has been reduced through the creation of two new districts of Kaliro and Buyende<sup>3</sup>.

Kamuli district's topography is a result of the Precambrian activity that yielded low to high fertility soils in the northern and southern ends respectively. Most of the soils are however, sand loams that support food crops such as potatoes, maize, cassava among others. The district experiences a bimodal type of rainfall which is about 110 mm during the main season that extends from March to May and least during the months of August through October (ibid).

The population in Kamuli, 70% of its 500,800 people live in rural areas compared to national population at 3.2%.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> See,

[http://www.ubos.org/onlinefiles/uploads/ubos/2009\\_HLG\\_%20Abstract\\_printed/kamuli%20district%20annual%20abstract.pdf](http://www.ubos.org/onlinefiles/uploads/ubos/2009_HLG_%20Abstract_printed/kamuli%20district%20annual%20abstract.pdf). Accessed on February 23, 2015 at 7.12pm.

<sup>3</sup> See, Kamuli District Development Plan for 2010/12-2014/15 (May 2010). Available at <http://kamulidistrict.go.ug/wp-content/uploads/2013/05/kamuli-DDP-vol-I-fy-2010-11-to-2014-15-517.pdf>. Accessed on February 23, 2015 at 6.53pm.

<sup>4</sup> See,

[http://busogaonline.com/uploads/3/3/8/8/3388275/sugarcane\\_cane\\_cash\\_food\\_insecurity\\_in\\_busoga\\_region\\_of\\_uganda-press.pdf](http://busogaonline.com/uploads/3/3/8/8/3388275/sugarcane_cane_cash_food_insecurity_in_busoga_region_of_uganda-press.pdf). Accessed on February 23, 2015 at 7.20pm.

## **2.0 Background**

The Development Network of Indigenous Voluntary Associations (DENIVA) under her local democracy program engages with members of the community to discuss and develop issues of intervention at the community level. This is through periodic Neighbourhood Assemblies (NAs) also known as citizen's parliaments that discuss and follows up issues of concern for different communities. The NAs are located at village and focus on issues of human rights, access to justice, civil rights etc. One of the districts where such NAs are located is Kamuli district. They deliver civic education knowledge using participatory adult learning methods.

However, for long this unique approach has not been documented at a scale that would inform the country of its successes. As such DENIVA entered into a collaborative arrangement with East African Broadcasting Ltd commonly known as NTV to capture people's voices on the topic: ***"LARGE SCALE COMMERCIAL AGRICULTURE: Implications of Sugarcane Growing and Food Insecurity in Kamuli District"***.

The field shooting took place on February 21, 2015 at Gabula Guest House, Kamuli town council.

## **3.0 Participants**

The People's Parliament/ Neighborhood Assembly brought together over 100 participants drawn from DENIVA Neighborhood Assemblies in Kamuli district, district technical and political leadership and the general public from Kamuli district as well as journalists from media houses in the district.

#### 4.0 Discussion during the People's Parliament

- **Licences for new sugarcane factories.** During the discussion, participants noted that there are over 13 new licences that have been issued for new sugarcane factories in Busoga region. So far 11 factories have been set up in 10 districts that make up Busoga



*Hon. Salam Musumba (Kamuli Local Government Chairperson) during the People's Parliament Session*

region-making an average of one factory per district. According to participants, the licencing of new sugar factories in the region did not take into consideration the zoning exercise and sugarcane was never an agreed crop for Kamuli district and Busoga region at large. Much of Kamuli district is under sugarcane growing. For example, Butansi sub-county in Kamuli district is almost covered by sugarcane with over 8,500 acres of land is reportedly covered with sugarcane.

- **Location of new sugarcane mills in proximity to old millers.** The Sugar Policy (2010) states, "...new sugar mills shall not be licensed within 25 kilometres radius of an existing mill". However, there are many mushrooming factories in Kamuli and Busoga region as a whole in contravention of this Policy directive. For example, Mayuge Sugar is less than 10 kms from Kakira Sugar that has left the two competing for the same out

growers. Poor farmers have been lured to take up loans that they cannot manage to pay, increased land wrangles among family members, as well as increased crime in the district.

- **Lack of regulatory institution to coordinate the sector.** There is general lack of a strategic and regulatory institution to coordinate and harmonize business transactions for all the sugar stake holders. This undermines business collaboration that is necessary for the growth of the sub sector across the entire value chain. It was evident from the People's Parliament that there is mutual suspicion between the pioneer millers like Kakira Sugar Works and the rest of the millers on issues such as pricing formula and sugar growing and purchasing agreements. The out-growers much as they are under an umbrella association are equally not united.
- **Sugarcane and food production in Busoga region.** According to Uganda Bureau of Statistics, food production grew by only 1.1% in 2011/2012 FY, food production in 2011/2012 FY. Sugar cane growing increased by 16.2%. Production of staple food like beans, cassava and sweet potatoes dropped by between 3 and 10%. Due to government policy through NAADS of increase household incomes: Farmers are abandoning their traditional food crops for cash crops. The collapse of Busoga Cooperative Union-farmers are taking individual decisions instead of zonal planning.
- **Long cane maturity period.** The current cane varieties supplied to farmers in Kamuli and the surrounding districts have high fibre content and low sucrose; which negatively affect productivity. Cane productivity rate of 5 tones cane per hectare per month is relatively low compared to other countries in the region. In addition, the average cane maturity age is 18 – 20 months, which is too long and uncompetitive relative to other countries where cane matures at 12 months. This was considered a big challenge for the farmers to realise the benefits that the industry presents. This coupled with limited research by Government (research has been left to the millers) mean Ugandan sugar cannot maintain the level of cost of production in relation to other world class producers like Brazil and Swaziland in Southern Africa.

- **The “Soga”culture on women.** Women provide food security in Soga culture and indeed in African culture. Unfortunately, the men in Kamuli lease land to sugarcane outgrowers without the consent of their wives leaving little or no land at all for food crop growing. Some men were reportedly abandoning their homes to take up “new wives” or shifting to live in urban areas after leasing the family land-which has caused a lot of domestic violence.

## **5.0 Conclusion**

The benefits of sugar cane growing are enormous to the millers and government ranging from taxes and balancing the B.O.P for the economy. However, for the small scale out growers they have to brace themselves with enormous challenges ranging from exploitation by the middle men, high interest rates on loans offered by the millers, poor planting materials that take along period to mature, food insecurity and generally poverty. If there is one success that the People’s Parliament achieved in Kamuli-is initiating dialogue between different stakeholders in the sugarcane sub-sector to harmonize approaches in the sub-sector to ensure that the rights of the out-growers are protected and that sugarcane growing does not subdue food production in Busoga region.

**[End]**