

The Uganda NGO Rio + 10 Coalition's Position Paper on Food Security and Market Access in preparation for the World Summit on Sustainable Development of Johannesburg (26th August – 4th September 2002)

At this time when Governments and Leaders of the World are preparing for the historic World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) of Johannesburg this August.

Concerned that a decade after Rio, non-implementation of the outcomes of Rio continues to undermine the vision and promise of the International community; and that generally sustainable development as a mainstream process of societal transformation still seems elusive. And recognizing that the successful implementation of Agenda 21, which was adopted at the Rio Summit, requires the total involvement of all individuals, groups, indigenous communities and institutions (both in Government and outside).

We, the representatives of the NGOs and civic groups of Uganda that have formed The Uganda NGO Rio + 10 Coalition¹ sincerely appeal to the minds, hearts and conscience of our Government and Non Governmental actors on the following identified issues:

At the National level

- The burden of the national debt and Structural adjustment policies and programmes restrict the National budget to a bare minimum
- Insecurity affects production, infrastructure and access to markets
- Gender inequality regarding access to basic services such as education and literacy, employment, shelter and land ownership
- Lack of a comprehensive land use policy to guide the various development activities
- HIV / AIDS pandemic which is affecting food security as it is decimating the rural agricultural labor force.
- Environmental degradation due to poor farming practices are leading to decreasing soil fertility, drought and poor harvests.

At the International level

- Unfair trade practices and the adverse impact of globalization due to tariff and non-tariff barriers, which limit our access to the markets of the rich countries.

¹ The Uganda NGO Rio + 10 Coalition, made up of up to 50 NGOs has as its backbone, the NGO focus groups. The Coalition has since October 2001, been carrying out assessment of Uganda's progress in implementing Agenda 21 and other commitments that came out of the Earth Summit (1992), Rio de Janeiro – Brazil.

- Irresponsible behavior of the mainly profit oriented transnational corporations (TNCs) through for example lack of respect for national and International rules and regulations.
- Diversion of the wealth and resources of our planet from provision of basic services, development and peace to destruction and war.
- New technologies especially biotechnology raises concerns in food safety, health, piracy, loss of rights, patent of life forms and the environment.

Our solutions and recommendations

Our recommendations and solutions that follow, are guided by the principles of universality with Uganda as a member of the human family; equity and justice in sharing and distribution of the social services; empowerment and involvement of women as full partners in development; a deep sense of moral leadership; giving ear to the sentiments and worries of the unprivileged poor; sensitivity and caring for the environment:

At the National level we call for

- A comprehensive food and nutrition policy agreed upon by all stakeholders. Women focused packages for example agriculture technologies, crop selection, extension messages created and delivered; research priorities should be an integral part.
- A Centralized arrangement among farmer groups, Government and NGOs which is essential for effective joint market accessibility
- Access and prioritizing energy and labor saving technology to sustain the natural resource base and to reduce the time burden of domestic work which can in turn be used for other productive purposes for example, women move an average loading of 26 metric ton for a kilometer per year (especially water and fuel wood), compared to less than 7 metric ton for a kilometer for men).
- Establishment and support for farm stores for agricultural inputs and produce, transport means and networks, agricultural processing units, especially in the vicinity of isolated rural communities.
- Peaceful resolution of conflicts in the various affected parts of Uganda so that we settle down for development activities and reduce on the IDPs and refugees
- Access to cheap and affordable medication for the increasing number of persons living with HIV / AIDS in order to prolong their lives for a continued labor force that contributes towards national food security

- More capacity building for the farmers in appropriate and environmentally friendly farming practices, including dissemination of the available relevant information

At the International level, we call for the following:

- Measures to enable the public to participate with informed minds of the pros and cons in decision making about genetically engineered foods and agro-inputs.
- Strict requirements of mandatory labeling of genetically modified products for purposes of traceability calls for well enforced safety and regulations on genetically modified foods, at the national and International level.
- Conditions attached to IMF – World Bank programmes that force poor countries to open their markets regardless of the impact on the poor people should be stopped.

For more information, please contact: The Project Coordinator, Uganda NGO Rio +10 Coalition
C/o Joint Energy and Environment Projects (JEEP)
P.O.Box 4264 Kampala Uganda
Tel: 256 41 267303 Fax: (c/o MS Uganda 256 41 530765
Email: jeep@imul.com