

WILDLIFE CONSERVATION IN UGANDA

Wildlife conservation refers to the protection of wildlife resources (flora & fauna) in their natural settings or habitats.

There are various wildlife conservation areas in Uganda which include;

- National parks e.g; Queen Elizabeth in Kasese, Kidepo valley national park in Kaabong.
- Wildlife reserves e.g. Ajai in West Nile, Bokora and Matheniko wildlife reserves
- Wildlife sanctuaries e.g. Ngamba sanctuary in Entebbe.
- Community wildlife conservation areas e.g. Karuma falls, community wildlife centre
- Forest reserves e.g. Mabira forest reserve, Budongo, Bugoma forest etc.

A SKETCH MAP OF UGANDA SHOWING VARIOUS WILDLIFE CONSERVATION AREAS.

WILDLIFE AS A BASIS FOR DEVELOPMENT OF TOURISM INDUSTRY IN UGANDA

Wildlife has promoted the development of the tourist sector in a number of ways.

- Tourists want to see wildlife in their natural settings or habitats hence the development of tourist activities like bird watching e.g. Bwindi impenetrable national park in Kanungu district, gorilla tracking in Mgahinga national park & butterfly watching in L. Mburu national park.
- Tourists are interested in carrying out sporting activities associated with wildlife e.g. hunting in controlled hunting areas like East Madi hunting area (Adjumani), they are also interested in game fishing in lake Victoria, R. Nile, etc.
- Tourists do research on ecological systems of relating living organisms & their environment at the institute of ecology at Mweya in Queen Elizabeth national park.
- Some tourists are business oriented & want to trade in animal and plant products e.g. ivory from elephants in Murchison falls national park & Queen Elizabeth national park.
- Some tourists want to do filming and photography e.g. in the tropical rainforests like Mabira forest, Budongo forest, etc which have unique characteristics. Also, filming & photography is done in national parks like Queen Elizabeth national park to show the different animal species found in Uganda.
- Some tourists are interested in cultural tourism which involves art & designing e.g. the tourists base on wildlife such as zebras in L. Mburu national park & tropical rainforests such as Mabira forest to develop their designs.
- Other tourists want to enjoy special dishes prepared from wildlife such as mushroom soup, antelope, buffalo & crocodile meat served in hotels & lodges such as Mweya Safari lodge in Queen Elizabeth national park in Kasese.

- Wildlife particularly plants are a source of herbs used in the treatment of many diseases such as the moringa tree in Budongo & Mabira forests so some tourists visit these areas to collect such herbs.
- Forests act as camping sites for tourists such as Mabira forest in Buikwe district, Mt. Elgon forest in Mbale & Mpanga forest in Mpigi district which have camping sites as well as guided forest walks.
- Preservation of wildlife helps to maintain ecological balance which in turn leads to tourism development, etc.

SIGNIFICANCE OF WILDLIFE CONSERVATION IN UGANDA.

Positive contributions;

- It has promoted the development of the tourism industry which is a source of foreign exchange.
- It makes profitable use of the would be waste lands such as steep slopes & arid areas e.g. Kidepo valley national park, L. Mburo national park, etc.
- It has enabled the government earn some substantial amount of revenue from licensing of game hunters e.g. in East Madi wildlife reserve
- It has led to the improvement of infrastructure e.g. where national parks are found.
- It has led to conservation of forests that have several uses like climatic modification.
- It has led to conservation of wildlife like the forest reserves which protect plants with medicinal value which local communities use for curative purposes.
- It has created job /employment opportunities for the local people.
- It has led to protection of the ecosystem which has been a home for some local communities.
- Protects plants & animals needed for scientific research. There has been creation of research centres for students from different disciplines.
- It has promoted rural development by attracting investment in lodging companies & other leisure amenities.
- It maintains ecological balance by protecting biological diversity.
- It provides communities near the national parks with raw materials for the crafts industry through sustainable harvesting.

Negative importance

- It has led to displacement of some indigenous communities from gazetted areas.
- Protected animals always escape & destroy farmland in the neighbourhood.
- Animals spread contagious diseases affecting both man & his livestock.
- It limits expansion of farmland & settlement despite population increase.
- National parks are breeding grounds for some vectors such as tsetse flies which affect man, his crops & livestock.

- Wildlife conservation areas like national parks, wildlife reserves and sanctuaries have been used as hide outs for anti government forces hence causing instabilities.
- Wildlife conservation has also led to loss of vegetation in the gazetted areas like national parks.

Problems facing wildlife conservation in Uganda / factors limiting wildlife conservation

- Pests & diseases which often attack wildlife e.g. anthrax.
- Harsh climatic conditions which may lead to death of wild animals e.g. prolonged drought.
- Pollution which makes the environment in national parks to be uncondusive for wildlife survival e.g. animals are disturbed by noise from tourists.
- Inadequate capital which has forced government to employ less personnel.
- Frequent bush fires which end up destroying large chunks of land which causes death of animals.
- Conflict with neighbouring communities as a result of wild animals destroying their properties.
- There is a problem of rampant poaching of wild animals thereby reducing their numbers.
- There is encroachment on wildlife conservation areas like national parks due to increase in population.
- Political instabilities / insecurities in some areas of wild life conservation centers e.g. Kasese where Queen Elizabeth national park is located.
- Limited skilled labour to work in wildlife conservation centers e.g. national parks like Kidepo valley national park, Murchison falls national park, etc.
- wild life trafficking/ smuggling
- limited research
- Ignorance/ illiteracy
- Limited technology related to wildlife conservation tags & chips.
- Deforestation
- Remoteness leading to inaccessibility / poor transport & communication network.
- Illegal grazing in national parks & wildlife reserves e.g.

Measures being taken to conserve wildlife in Uganda/ ways through which wildlife is being conserved

- There is gazetting of national parks such as Kidepo valley, Kibale, Semuliki national parks, etc where wildlife is conserved.
- There is gazetting of forest reserves such as Ziwa, Entebbe , Ngamba, Kazinga channel sanctuaries, etc.

- There is gazetting of zoos, UWEC (Uganda Wildlife Education Center) at Entebbe.
- There is gazetting of controlled hunting areas/ game cropping e.g. in lake Mburo national park, matheniko, Bakora wildlife reserves, East madi hunting area.
- There is training of man power to work in wildlife conservation areas such as national parks,wildlife reserves such as Kigezi, Katonga, Queen Elizabeth national parks, etc
- Organisations aimed at conserving wildlife have been established e.g. UWA, NFA, UTB, etc.
- There is mass education and sensitisation through radios, newspapers, TV programmes about the importance of wildlife conservation.
- Legislation through enacting laws and policies to protect wildlife e.g. the wetland act of 1996.
- Improvement / establishment of infrastructure such as roads, hotels, etc in the conservation areas.
- Intensive research is being carried out e.g. at Nabyeya forestry institute.
- There is relocation / translocation of wildlife species e.g. rhinos from Kenya to ziwa rhino sanctuary, giraffes from Kidepo valley to L. Mburo national park.
- Establishment of the anti- poaching unit of 1997 / tourism police
- Community conservation programmes of wildlife e.g. conservation of medicinal plants, totems in Buganda.
- Re- alignment of boundaries e.g. Mt. Elgon, Mt. Rwenzori, etc
- Establishment of trenches and electric fences to prevent animals from escaping to communities e.g.in Queen Elizabeth national park.
- Treatment of animals/ ensuring health e.g. in Queen Elizabeth national park, L.Mburo national park with help from European Union, World Bank e.g. kobs in Toro-Semuliki tested buffaloes of rinder pest in Kidepo
- Afforestation and re afforestation are being carried out.

Reference questions

1. “Wild life is the basis of tourism development in Uganda”. Discuss.
2. a) Explain the challenges of conserving wild life in Uganda.
b) Explain the ways in which wildlife is being conserved.
3. Assess the impact of wild life conservation on the environment in Uganda.
4. Assess the role played by national parks in the economic development of Uganda.