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UACE Geography paper 3: S101 General Paper- Deforestation in Uganda

Deforestation means cutting or clearing trees or forests over a large area for the facilitation of other human activities. It is a serious environmental concern that results in the loss of biodiversity, damage water cycle, destroy natural habitat, leading to soil erosion and reduction of soil productivity. Deforestation is also a contributor global warming and climate change.

The need to conserve trees and forest cannot be overstated, because trees produce oxygen, transpiration lead to convection rainfall, trees constitute medical herbs , trees absorb carbon dioxide from the environment and minimize global warming and so on.

Factors for the decrease in other types of forest cover

- Increased demand for timber for paper, building and construction industry leads to cut down trees and consequently deforestation. An example is the allocation of Namanve plantation forest to development of industries.
- High energy demand especially wood fuel in domestic and industrial sector. Firewood constitutes over 80% energy requirement in Uganda for domestic cooking, firing bricks and preservation of fish at the fish landing sites such as Kasenyi fish landing site. In the rural areas such as Nakasongola firewood is almost the only source of fuel for cooking and light.
- Extension of rural and urban settlements which have led to clearing of forests and conversion of green space into built up areas for example the expansion of Kampale has eaten up all wetlands around it such Kyambogo-Kireka wetlands.
- Increased demand for agricultural land, trees are cut to provide land for crop growth and rearing of animals. For instance there is massive deforestation in Kalangala district to grow palm oil trees; and part of Mabira forest has been cleared to grow sugarcanes for commercial production of sugar.
- Deforestation also occurs due natural causes such bush fires, pest and diseases, land slides, volcanic eruptions, earth quakes, climate changes, floods and droughts.
- Transport leads to massive forest clearance to make ways for roads, railway and airports for example Northen bypass.
- Security concerns e.g. pest eradication in Mayuge district and removal of rebels hideouts.
- Corruption by forest officers that fail to enforce forest protection laws.
- Mining and quarrying is another cause of deforestation; for instance mining of copper at Kilembe mine led to massive deforestation in Kasese.

Effects of deforestation on the environment

- Destruction has led to changes in climate in the area e.g. decline in rainfall.
- Removal of vegetation results into problems of soil erosion and siltation of river channels due to the excessive run off.
- Rapid loss of soil fertility due to loss of humus which affects crop production.
- Lowering of water table that is reflected in loss of surface water.
- It increases pollution especially of air and reduction in purification due to loss of carbon dioxide absorbers.
- Loss of valuable tree species e.g. for medicine, timber/loss of animals and birds.
- Destruction of natural habitats for wild animals leading to migrations.
- Shortage of wood fuel and charcoal leading to energy crisis.
- Causes reduction in government revenue and foreign exchange from tourist industry since tourist sites are destroyed.
- Leads to unemployment for instance for people who depend on tourist industry.
- The flooding of rivers destroys lives and property.
- It contributes to landslides and its negative effects.
- Lack of wind breakers contribute to the destruction caused by wind storms.

Measure being taken to combat deforestation

- Afforestation and Re-afforestation to reverse the negative effects of global warming
- Use alternative source of energy such as solar energy, biogas or electricity to substitute firewood for light and cooking.
- Prefer buying recyclable products
- Controlled exploitation of forestry resources.
- Forest protection legislation.
- Educating the public to plant trees, and protect the available forests.
- Training official forest worker on efficient utilization of forests.
- Encouraging agroforestry.
- Carry out research in forestry.
- Population control to minimize demand for forest products

Thanks

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