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*Review*

# “Marginalized livelihoods under neo-liberal development policies in Uganda”

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**The inclusion of development ethics into the development discourse are increasingly coming under critical review by both development scholars and practitioners, especially those in the realm of civil society. The inclusion of development ethics has not only been a local but also global project. Given that development has become so professionalized that it is difficult to think outside its terms of reference, inclusion of ethical issues has become problematic. One would assume that with the implementation of the neo-liberal policies in many poor African countries in the last twenty or so years would enhance better livelihood strategies and patterns. However, the non-observance of the development ethics in the implementation of SAPs has led to the continued suffering of the majority of the rural populations in Africa. The paper argues that implementation of neo-liberal policies, such as structural adjustment policies (SAPs) without observing development ethics has hindered the creation of an enabling environment for the rural people to adopt better livelihood patterns and strategies. Implementation of SAPs and the interrelationship between durable inequalities are examined and evidence suggests that there is symbiotic relationship between failure to observe ethics in development and continued marginalization of African livelihoods.**

**Key word:** Neo-liberal, policies, African, professionalized.

## INTRODUCTION

Development as a concept is still as controversial and contradictory as it was when scholars first coined it in the 1940’s in as much as it related to colonized communities of Africa. Today, development is a discourse widely used by political leaders, bureaucrats, publicists, social scientists, philosophers, and ordinary citizens (Sutton, 1989) for various reasons and it implies a wide range of meanings attached to the term. The intellectual composition of scholars has become large and complex, encompassing many other disciplines, such as economics, political science, and sociology.

The term livelihood, on the other hand, loosely implies ways of survival, including peoples capabilities, claims and access to resources (Bebbington, 1999; Chambers and Conway, 1992; Leach et al., 1999), livelihood diversifica-tion (Ellis, 1998; 2000), and household coping strategies (Davis, 1996). This article examines how people’s lives have become marginal by failure to observe development ethics, while implementing Structural Adjustment Policies (SAPs) in Africa.[1] I will first examine the history of development and globalization; these two concepts seem to have precipitated the implementation of SAPs and later present evidence from a research conducted in three districts in Uganda to illustrate contradictory outcomes to livelihoods.

[1] Structural adjustment is a generic term that describes a package of economic and institutional measures, which multilateral and bilateral aid donors seek to implement in order to help poor states in return for loans to correct economic imbalances, such as balance of payment problems, and the reconstruction of the economy. Most of the poor states’ economic and institutional problems are a result of debt crises that date back to the 1970s, because of the oil crisis and unrestricted borrowing. Scott (1992) argues that the obligation to repay debts imposes severe strains on economic performance of a country since developmental resources are diverted to service debts (p. 202).

**Historical trajectory of development**

The trajectory of academic knowledge production on development issues has moved through time and space with each particular period having a peculiar focus. Analysis of development in this paper begin by recognizing that colonialism and neo-colonialism in general, and the colonial influence and experience in particular, have influenced and continue to influence the form of development experienced in 'poor' countries. It is within this colonial era and experiences that those livelihoods of the 'poor' gain sharp and distinct differences. I do not rule out emerging class differences in pre-colonial societies; especially the gender differences though the colonial and postcolonial era could have exaggerated the problem further. Here, I am particularly interested in the period after World War II, although information on earlier periods could help to put the post-world war II period into historical perspective.

After World War II, the concept of 'development' largely became synonymous with ideas of 'progress' in as far as the poor countries were concerned. The discourse of progress relates to western imported knowledge that views anything that is not in the main stream as backward and therefore in need of modernization. Development as 'progress' imply increased well-being, but the use of this definition in practice has tended to be narrower and economically driven. Development, for the most part, has focused on Gross National Product (GNP), that is, how many industries a country has and how much wealth it has accumulated. This is misleading because development as a concept and discourse tends to aggregate a diverse reality into a homogeneous entity. Since World War II, theories of development have moved from the concept of modernization (in the mid 1950's) to political economy or dependency theory (in the late 1960s and 1970s) to the postmodernism of the mid 1980's onwards. In the late 1980s and 1990s, the development debate shifted to ideas about structural adjustment policies (SAPs) in particular and the globalization process in general (Mkandawire, 2002:117). Oftentimes, such debates have been about the role of states in the development process.

The ideal development practice earlier on was, to eradicate inequalities within and between nations, take measures with a view to correct existing differences and unequal access to progress and such development needs pursued with modern, empirical knowledge through education and training (Sutton, 1989:37). However, given the present unequal levels of development existing among nations, countries that were far off the development indices were to use their freedom and self-determination in any way they pleased to develop.

Countries therefore, acted as their own agents of development. While the so called 'developed' countries had a responsibility to the equal and unfettered development of the 'less developed' countries through aid, which was supposed to be politically and culturally neutral (without infringing on the sovereignty and cultural identity of the aid recipient country), this seem to have been an illusion based on what was practiced. The 'developing' countries were also supposed, in turn, to be democratic by observing human rights in various forms, all implemented in the numerous United Nations Charters. Most of the aid assistance given, did not only infringe on the sovereignty of recipient countries but rather stifled their socio-cultural identity to the extent of being reduced to "beggar-nations" because of the high interest rates placed on the loans and aid money for development. This was the western model of development based on capitalistic development ideals. The second model development, which did not have strict prescriptions about right of self-determination and human rights, was the eastern version that subscribed to the communist or socialist model of development.

This development ideal depended on the principle of collective action of people rather than the individuals; its was to de-link colonized countries from the appendages of colonial powers, including a fight against dependence on former colonial masters (Sutton, 1989: 39). In fact, improved welfare of the people was an obvious outcome while the western development model was apathetic to welfare issues and concerned primarily with private property and accumulation of wealth by individuals and businesses.

Overall, the greatest victims to the power based on the term 'development' were the poor countries in the global south that were undergoing political rebirth through independence. This analysis helps to show the early ideological dilemma those who engaged the idea of development had to contend with, let alone clearly understanding what thrust of force they dealt with. This is the time when widespread mistrust between the so called 'developed' and 'developing' countries emerged, with the former gaining independence and calling on the 'developed countries' terms in the different charters already agreed upon as unfair to their citizens. The 'developing' countries could not believe that the impersonal market forces as conceived in the international trade organizations (ITO), the World Bank, the international Monetary Fund (IMF), ruled them and in fact, determined most of the economies of the poor nations (McMichael, 2000: 136-9). The General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) was very unfavorable to the raw material producing former colony countries, especially in Africa. Thus, the development orthodoxy had begun on an oppositional platform right from its conception, implementation and outcomes to the poor countries. Sutton, in his article on development ideology contends that the development ideology had, most of the time, depended on governments as the prime agents of development; questioning their faith took away the means of rationally controlling development (Sutton, 1989: 52-3).

The belief of development theory that countries in the global south are capable of adapting to modern and western knowledge and therefore are able to match up with the concept of 'progress' seem too, to have been ill-conceived. In fact, this was the very latent motif for the implementation of SAPs by the world leading financial and economic development regulators. The countries in the global south have been under these idiosyncratic tutelages since the term 'development' was invented. Thus, the ascendancy of the neo-liberal development model could be a last step in the western dominance of development theory and practice. The main characteristics of the neo-liberal development model, according to Carter and Zimmerman (1998: 5-6) include making private property rights sacrosanct, non-interference of decision-making processes, usually done by the private sector, strict fiscal and monetary policy carefully implemented to secure a stable balance of payment, and privatization of state enterprises. Others include opening of national economies to the vagaries of international market regulation and finally, that less of government resources should not be directed into the social services, such as education and health. I will come back to this point with specific neo-liberal policies later.

There is a lot of contention in terms of critiques and reviews about what development means and how this relates to development ethics. Many academics, policy makers and practitioners, including famous journal publications in African studies, development studies, history, political science, and sociology, have championed this critique (Ollawa, 1983; Sutton, 1989). Today, the focus on the concept 'development' seems to have changed to globalization, the debilitating structural adjustment policies (SAPs), and of course, the causes of poverty and means of eradicating it. Development seems to have reached an impasse.

There are contentions as to the real beginning of the current impasse, especially as far as African countries and economies are concerned. Many factors must have played a big role. These include the post-independence African socio-political and economic adjustment, the 1973 world oil crisis that has culminated into the ever-increasing debt burden that promises to make African countries' economies infinitely dependant on foreign aid and donations.

## Globalization and the state crisis in the Global South

The 'Globalization' process is both a political and technologically induced phenomenon. It is political, first, in the sense that the opening up of capital markets has occurred as a direct result of governments, either willingly or unwillingly, ceding to pressures from international financial interests (Weiss, 1997: 23-4). It is political also because a number of states seek directly to facilitate rather than constrain the internationalization of corporate activity in trade, investment, and production. The African Growth Opportunity Act (AGOA) is a recent example of how the US government is encouraging growth in Africa by opening up markets to selected products, but simultaneously keeping certain markets closed. For example, food and other agricultural products which poor states are capable of producing in large quantities are shut out of the lucrative western markets by the maintenance of huge subsidies to farmers, especially in the U.S (Maren, 1997).

While the unevenness of globalization, the diversity of modern state forms, and the contradictory character of state policies mean that any generalization on this issue demands careful qualification, nevertheless, there is a powerful argument, as suggested by McGrew, indicating that globalization is dissolving the essential structures of modern statehood. In effect, globalization compromises four critical aspects of the modern nation-state: its competence, its form, its autonomy; and ultimately, its authority or legitimacy (McGrew, 1992a: 87). However, the common contention has been that in the case of the weak state, it is hard for the state to promote development policies as engines of quality livelihoods, leave alone observing development ethics. In addition, because of inherent structural defects, the state machinery in a weak state is unable to deliver on basic support services that would generate development. However, in my view, the problem is not only about the weak state but also about those who manage the state system and how they come to be in charge of it. For example, the Uganda parliament has in the past, censored alleged corrupt ministers but because they carry a lot of political influence, they end up being recycled back into ministerial jobs with impunity.

This raises the question of whether the managers of the state system are legitimate or illegitimate and how their legitimacy contributes to the delivery of basic services and subsequently quality of livelihoods. In addition, the problem of managers of state system also centers on political actors who have little regard or even no understanding of local level conditions (Scott, 1998). This little or no regard for local conditions, in most cases, will leave state managers the free will to use the state to pursue their own interests rather than the needs of people, whom they are supposed to use the state to serve. Other state managers simply have less grasp of the dynamics of people's livelihood and are therefore incapable of providing adequate political support. An additional impediment to state management is a bureaucracy groomed in the tradition of central planning and corruption, with a mind-set that has a lethal effect on development in general and development ethics in particular.

In the process of poor state management by both political and bureaucratic leadership, there is a reduction and redefinition on a broad scale of Third World state powers. Even though state managers are still a supreme source of legitimacy and delegate most of the authority, they exercise no real capacity over their economic domains. An example in most sub-Saharan African states is how SAPs have curtailed state capacities in the name of improved quality of life (Weiss, 1997: 17). Weiss rejects the idea of the shrinking state because it retains the direct role of supervision but argues that this is adaptable to a modern state by virtue of its embedded dynamic economic power and the inter-state system.

Therefore, weak states then face extensive pressures from their citizens and domestic groups to regulate those transnational activities that directly impinge upon their interests and livelihoods and divert the energy and resources to their own country of origin. The form of the state in the end become, seriously distorted. With the increased emphasis by international norms to ease international coordination and cooperation, a staggering expansion in the numbers of intergovernmental organizations and international regimes has also increased. Thus, in whatever sector of state policy, there exists a corresponding set of international regulatory institutions or agencies (McGrew, 1992a: 88). This leads to the third aspect of the consequences of globalization on the state, especially the decrease of state autonomy. State autonomy is a state's capacity to act independently in the articulation and pursuit of domestic and international policy objectives (McGrew, 1992a: 90). McGrew writes that to understand diminishing state autonomy, we need to look at its 'scope' and 'domains.' McGrew further argues that 'scope' implies the level or intensity of constraints on state action, while 'domains' refers to the policy spaces or areas within which such constraints operate (McGrew, 1992b).

The fact that states now operate within a set strategic norm anticipation and policy options, they restrict the list of potential policies, which state managers can choose to implement. The effects of decreasing competence, converging forms, and diminishing autonomy contributes to an erosion of state authority and legitimacy. Influenced by the states' crisis coupled with debt burdens of the 1970s and 1980s, a number of writers have argued that globalization contributes to a crisis of compliance and authority within the nation-state (Rosenau, 1990). The main thesis of this literature is that because globalization undermines the competence and autonomy of the nation-state, it reduces the effectiveness of government that in turn undermines the legitimacy, and authority of the state (Rosenau, 1990; McGrew, 1992a: 91) but also compromises on ethical issues in the development enterprise.

The state in the poor countries, therefore, has contradictory strengths and limitations regarding livelihood strategies adopted in the rural areas, especially in as far as international development ethics are concerned. On one hand, a strong state directs developments that positively improve citizens' livelihoods, such as having a welfare system and policies to steer up local development without undermining self-sustainable development. On other hand, with the aid-dependent state constantly relying on International Financial Institutions (IFIs) loan portfolios implemented through SAPs that undermines the state's authority and power to enforce and implement 'good development,' the quality of life adopted by citizens is a distortion of what a state symbolizes.

This is because the state in poor countries has lost its capacity to provide for the people. This outcome is due to the globalization processes, such as the implementation of structural adjustment policies, which severely impairs the poor states' capacities, capabilities, and transforms into a weak state dependant on handouts and directions from the powerful West. In the following section, I specifically highlight the impact of SAPs as implemented by the IFI on the nature and form of rural livelihoods in general and quality of life in particular and show how implementation of such policies violates development ethics.

Development ethics involves the whole issue of international responsibilities of individuals, states and private business companies. Indeed global ethics has two dimensions – an assertion of universal values and trans-societal responsibilities. If this is the case, then the development ethics can be seen as increasingly being acceptable, at least for those who already see ethics generally as implicitly universal (Dower, 1998, 2005). Thus, based on this assumption, there are several determinants of good and ethical development practices in any country including physical conditions, levels of skill, access to clean water, road infrastructure but most important are the ethical assumptions and priorities that guide what agents do. Some of the agents include aid agencies working in the field or government agencies working with poor people in the country with certain assumptions about what the good is or what well-being is that development is meant to deliver. It might be governments or private business companies pursuing certain general priorities about development because they have a certain conception of what development ought to be. These may be key figures in the governments of other countries and in international institutions who, in addition to views about what the ends and means of development ought to be, have a normative view about the right ordering of international relations, example, about what countries ought to do vis-a-vis other countries. Therefore, development ethics, according to Dower (2005) can be summed up in three a number of different questions. These are what conception of the good should inform development. Second, what norms should determine the social, political and economic relations in a society that most appropriately delivers the ends of development in the form of well-being? Third, what norms should inform the international framework within which countries pursue their development, including the ethical debates about aid, trade, investment and debt relief, the normative standing of international bodies that deliver aid or support development, such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund in implementing of SAP policies in Africa.

## Structural adjustment policies and African states

Many African countries, including Uganda, adopted most neo-liberal measures, including fiscal austerity, privatize-tion, promotion of non-traditional exports, encouragement of foreign investment, tariff reductions and changes to labor protection (Mkandawire, 2002; Scott, 1992), as a measure to stabilize and jump-start the economy after several years of ruin. The adjustment process in many poor countries has since the late 1970s, been caused by several factors among which are the structural characteristics of their economies as well as several unfavorable conditions and events in international and domestic polities. Many of the developing countries have a high dependency on exports of commodities for foreign-exchange needs and rely mainly on rudimentary physical and financial infrastructures, which limit sound invest-ments. In addition, there is limited domestic production of manufactured goods coupled with a poorly and inefficiently managed government and public sectors with incompetent and corrupt officials that causes development projects to fail. As mentioned earlier on, additional factors include the oil shocks and crisis in the 1970s and 1980s and continued deterioration of terms of trade, protectionism in developed countries, irregularity in the adjustment mechanism, and various other domestic factors (Scott, 1992: 204-5; Olukoshi, 1996; Leftwich, 1996; Mosley et al., 1991).

Whenever a government asks for a loan from the international financial institutions and other bilateral lenders, it is supposed to adhere to certain specified conditions. Such conditions are generally standardized and based on structures and assumptions derived from the experiences of western economies, with institutional and structural assumptions of a well-functioning commodity exchange and credit facilities. The majority of the loans recommended by the IFIs to poor countries require devaluation of the currency, liberalization of the exchange system, reduction of imported goods and increased exports. However, the devaluation process seriously damages economies of countries experiencing a very low rate of economic growth because it is difficult to increase exports without imports, especially for countries that rely on foreign manufactured goods to increase production at home. The biggest burden falls on the countries implementing adjustment policies rather than the well-established economies. The poor rural dwellers suffer most of the brunt of the adjustment process that also reduces the role of the state in service provision (Stiglitz, 2002). Recent studies highlight the impacts of SAPs on weak and unstable economies, class structure, and transnational networks (Babb, 2005).

Looking at Africa and Uganda in particular, almost every aspect of life has effects due to the structural adjustment process. SAPs have affected every economic and social sector, every group, and the entire social framework. Generally, many scholars agree that there are differing opinions as to the roots of the African crisis or problems that led to the introduction of SAP's in the early 1980's. Some have looked at the dwindling terms of trade, the oil prices of the 1970's and the rising external debt, the narrow export base of most African countries, mainly agricultural products, falling levels of private foreign investments, and diminishing aid transfers. Others look at the worsening internal policy distortions as having adverse consequences for production, particularly bad governance leading to the weakening of state capacity and capability. The problems of political patronage and 'primitive' accumulation are associated with the '(neo) – patrimonial' state, which pitted the urban areas against the rural (discussed somewhere else), curtailed the competitiveness of African economies in the international system, and obstructed the achievement of laid down developmental objectives (Olukoshi, 1996: 52; Bryceson, 2000; Evans, 1994). The policies and institutions of the post-colonial state-led pattern of development in Africa worked to benefit legitimacy-hungry political elites (mostly urban-based clients) to the detriment of the rural majority. Thus, the period from the early 1980s has witnessed numerous publications describing the post-colonial African state as 'vampire,' 'predatory,' 'soft,' 'parasitic,' 'weak,' 'unsteady,' etc (Olukoshi, 1996: 55). Structural adjustment became the only solution for the eradication of poverty and debt burden (Muhumuza, 2002).

The challenge for SAPs was simply to develop the capacity to abandon the structures of the state and give free will to forces of the market to work their miracle. Even though the African state typically reformed, the IFIs realized later that the state had an important role to play in creating an enabling environment for the market to function (Olukoshi, 1996: 56). These states facilitated the passing of important legislation to repeal redundant restrictive laws and create a formidable investment atmosphere by providing adequate security to investors. In Uganda, the IFIs demanded that Uganda fulfills several conditionalities before benefiting from their loan and grant facilities. For example, in 1991, IFIs demanded that the government reduce the defense budget and channel the money into poverty reduction programs (Oguttu, 1991). In addition, the government was required to stop a war that was taking place in the north, cut social services such as health and education, and stop the construction of Mityana – Fort-Portal road (on a barter trade arrangement with the Yugoslavia government), but instead seek a loan to construct a smaller road. The government was also required to close the newly opened Mbarara University of Science and Technology that was training medical doctors because there were supposedly no enough resources to sustain it. The argument by donors was that the government could not afford the luxury of having another University while the existing one – Makerere University – was poorly facilitated.

Many of the conditions were appropriate, such as reducing defense expenditures and stopping war in the northern parts of the country, but others have exposed marginalized groups to more stress and absolute poverty. The implication, for example, of cutting social services is that the poor will have to look for money to pay for hospitals, which they cannot afford. These put a great deal of strain and stress on the rural poor and increase their suffering thereby affecting their quality of life and livelihood patterns and strategies. However, when the World Bank, after seeing the contradictory nature of such policies and the practical impossibility of such conditions, began to shift its focus and abandon key features of its neo-liberal stand. More emphasis has been on poverty alleviation and support to social sectors on developmental grounds, especially relaxing its stand on user fees policy in schools and hospitals.

There has been debates about what SAPs targeted and their impacts. Some supporters of the policies have argued that SAPs would improve Africa's long toiling and marginalized rural majority. Other scholars, such as Bates and Pletcher, argued that there exists a fundamental conflict of interest between industrialists and peasants (Bates, 1981; Pletcher, 1986), or between the urban coalition (Bryceson, 2000) and structural adjustment. Bryceson argues that African post-colonial states extracted surpluses from poor rural dwellers in the form of urban food supply and cash crops for exports to get the necessary foreign exchange (Bryceson, 2000). SAPs would supposedly help resolve the conflict in favor of the rural populace. The empowerment of the rural poor therefore became a key message from these studies, most of which dealt with the implications of structural adjustment for the agricultural sector (Olukoshi, 1996: 59; Stiglitz, 2002; Caufield, 1996).

The entire framework of the design and implementation of the adjustment program, including the leverage acquired and exercised by the multi-lateral donors, suggests that ownership was bound to remain the domain of the donor for a long time to come. At the same time, there was an attempt by donor countries to show that the implementation of economic reform is related to good governance. This 'good governance' thesis, suggested by donors and IFIs, states that there should be a move for accountability of African governments to their people, promotion of rule of law, transparency and openness, predictability and policy consistency in a more participatory 'empowerment' environment (Olukoshi, 1996: 67). However, the critics of the 'good governance' thesis, such as Olukoshi, look at its failure to recognize that structural adjustment and its management were integral aspects of the problems of governance that persisted in many African countries. The adjustment program results in authoritarian rule/outcomes in its entirety: philosophy, design and implementation. It entails use of a carrot and stick method that encourages those in power to implement programs like cost sharing even though they hurt their people, in return for favorable loans and experimenting with new policies. Others were promised debt reduction or sometimes cancellation. Leaders who supported the implementation of SAPs got extra advantages on access to loans and good governance was not strictly enforced.

Thus, the implementation of SAPs has changed the economies of poor states, such as Uganda. Their negative consequences were far greater than their benefits, especially for the quality of life of the rural poor. Such consequences are visible today. One could argue that SAPs only helped the few elites in government positions who were able to implement the policies but at the same time, steal some money meant for the poor. In addition, it is not clear whether SAPs helped the democratization process since, in some respects, it weakened the state and destroyed state institutions necessary for the democratization process, while simultaneously strengthening civil society by expanding or creating alternative non-state centers of power. It is also argued that efforts to establish democracy, transparent and accountable forms of rule, under the neo-liberal "good governance" agendas have set the parameters for the political context for neo-liberalism's implementation (Kohl, 2002). As noted above, such establishment of the neo-liberal economic reforms was not without contention. The speed and depth of neo-liberal restructuring were publicly and politically contentious (Corkhill and Cubbitt, 1988; Hey and Klak, 1999; Huber and Solt, 2004), although governments and international financial institution representatives presented them as benign, with any problems blamed on their incompleteness (Walton, 2004).

Therefore, having explored the theoretical underpinnings of SAPs and their relationship to development ethics, the next section explores evidence in the actual implementation of SAPs and the livelihood patterns and strategies in three localities in Uganda. It is these smaller details that we must focus on in order to appreciate the bigger perspective of SAPs implementation. The small pictures gives us the big picture, or better still the details we need in order to understand how ethical issues have been ignored in the implementation of SAPs in Africa to the detriment of the small suffering citizens.

**Evidence from three districts in Uganda**

To illustrate my argument above, I draw evidence from a study conducted in three districts (Kyenjojo, Kibaale and Bushenyi) in Uganda in 2004, depicting both a changing livelihoods and the impact of the implementation of SAPs. All three districts have experienced changes that continue to define livelihood patterns and strategies, including the dreaded SAPs. The changes include emergence of new crops since the late 1990s, such as vanilla, upland rice, and *aloe vera*, and second, market liberalization in early 1990s. Farmers in all districts have got used to selling farm produce to the intermediary buyers rather than working in cooperatives that eventually collapsed in late 1980s under neoliberal policies. Evidence shows that households engage in multiple livelihood activities because no single activity is sufficient to sustain basic needs. Residents in the six villages revealed that given the vagaries of the market situation and uncertainty about whether the activities the family engages in are actually sustainable, it was not entirely possible to claim that each of these areas specializes in one particular livelihood pattern. Instead, residents in each village more or less engage in a variety but similar livelihood patterns and strategies with minor variations due to the climate, soils and historical reasons. In each village, the majority of households raised poultry while others own a piglet or goats for quick conversion to cash when a need arises while a few own cattle.

There is a drive to introduce new high yielding crops through government institutional interventions, such as National Agricultural Advisory services (NAADS). The many new crops introduced include Vanilla and wilt resistant varieties of clonal coffee and bananas. Apart from animal and subsistence farming, other people receive payment in cash for economic activities, such as the laborers on tea plantations and factories in Bushenyi and Kyenjojo, and tobacco and sugarcane growing in Kibaale. For example, Ankole tea estate and factory, managed by Rwenzori Highland Tea Company[2] is located within walking distance of Kayanga village while Igara Tea Factory, managed by Uganda Tea Growers Corporation (UTGC) though relatively smaller than the latter, is located in Butare village. For Kayanga and Kinyantale villages, male household heads obtain livelihoods from working in the factory and tea plantations nearby or those with small tea farms (out growers) sell their farm produce to the factory for processing. Butare village residents benefit by selling their retail shop merchandise to the factory workers, hence in the process, increasing their turnovers. Butare residents have also benefited differently from the factory located in their township by having salaries of schoolteachers and workers in the nearby Uganda Tea Growers Cooperation (UTGC) factory paid through the newly established village bank (Kyamuhunga Peoples' Savings and Credit Development Association), saving vital resources like transport costs to Bushenyi-Ishaka Township but also allows the rural saving bank to expand.

In Kyenjojo and Kibaale districts, the situation seems to be different from Bushenyi district. In Kyenjojo, residents expressed satisfaction that their villages were finally becoming 'modernized' in sense of seeing large tracts of land opened up for tea plantation but at the same time, their land is diminishing since Rwenzori Commodities, a subsidiary of the property mogul, Mukwano Industries, has bought almost all village land (including part of Kinyantale village).

The company is proceeding to plant more tea seedlings, leaving little room for individuals to expand their farms and gardens. However, villagers are able to get employment opportunities that guarantee them some cash at the end of every month.[3] However, the impact of this capital penetration into hitherto untapped or cultivated areas opens up much interference in the humble livelihood patterns of the villagers. In Kibaale district, cultivable land has been scarce and the little available is not fertile for crop production due to over cultivation using rudimentary subsistence farming techniques, such as burning grass that would otherwise add nutrients to the soils. Second, a large part of the land is owned by absent Baganda property owners or is now being occupied by immigrant Bakiga.

For village peasant farmers, tea is an activity they look for, according to one key informant. Since the area is located near the edge of a forest, it is common for residents to cut timber for supply to tea factories and some to engage in farming on a small scale while others raise cows. On average, a family with a middle class income owns about 10 to 20 cows for milk. To sum up, coffee, banana, tea and bee keeping are the major sources of livelihoods in Bushenyi district.

Banana, a perennial crop, is important in that people in Bushenyi have strategically got accustomed to farming it because of the existence of markets in urban centers facilitated by easy access because of the road network. Banana growing became prominent as both a cash and food crop during President Idi Amin's era (in the 1970s) when coffee prices were very low and other sources of income were not important. As an alternative, the residents started growing banana on a small scale and this

[2] Rwenzori Highland Tea Company is a multi-national corporation owned by the Commonwealth Development Corporation (CDC) based in London. It owns some other business enterprises in Kyenjojo and Kabarole districts

[3] Such large-scale changes affect village livelihoods both in positive and negative ways.

eventually became a livelihood activity for almost every household. With the ready market available in urban areas and a tarmac road, banana-growing activity has not only become a major source of household livelihood, but Bushenyi district is the leading supplier of bananas to Kampala urban market. Unlike in Kibaale and Kyenjojo districts, where the banana variety grown, before the banana bacterial wilt disease decimated it, is for brewing local beer, Bushenyi mainly grows edible varieties while the variety grown in Kyenjojo and Kibaale cannot easily be directly eaten for food unless in severe hunger periods.

There is also a visible presence of donors both at the district and village levels. In Kayanga village, a Japanese research organization, sponsored by Japanese International Cooperation Agency (JICA), has established Kalinzu Eco-Tourism center. A village local official in Kayanga Village says some people in the village earn a living through working with Japanese researchers in the forest reserve while others work as tourist guides. Before the collapse of Kilembe Copper Mining Company, a Canadian majority shareholding consortium in 1975, the Kalinzu forests sawmill employed village members in different sections. However, since its collapse, private individuals and companies obtain licenses to lumber in the forest. Occasionally, Kayanga village residents get employment as casual laborers cutting and carrying timber. A few people work as forest guards and other business activities. This diversifies source of income and livelihoods though it appears gender segregated since only men get employment as laborers.

Kibaale district has three counties of Bugangaizi, Buyanja and Buyaga with the basic source of livelihoods being farming or agriculture. This sector employs more than 90% of the people. However, other sectors like trade have become popular livelihood activities. Many people involved in trade as an activity are in business of buying agricultural produce, such as coffee, tobacco, groundnuts, bananas, and potatoes from the farmers in Kibaale and others essential commodities, like clothes, sugar, salt and soap from Kampala. Another livelihood activity is fishing on Lake Albert (tilapia fish). However, there were complaints from respondents about how they have not so far benefited a lot because most of the fishes are taken across either to Zaire or the Bundibugyo because of the terrain (rift valley). Secondly, it is cumbersome crossing the rugged and deep rift valley with vehicles to collect fish products from the lake. Thus, even though residents in Kibaale are ideally supposed to benefit from fishing as an activity, both as a source of protein and money, they instead do not and end up missing to diversify their livelihoods.

Even though the system of growing and selling food crops is not perfect yet to a level of obtaining profits, residents have to find a way and means of survival. However, finding where to cultivate today even for subsistence, is a problem because of population density. Respondents in a focus group discussion in Kimanya village mentioned to me that in the past (about 30 to 40 years ago), a person usually had about 2 acres of coffee or bananas and that would be enough through out the year (people talk of the past in glorious ways). With families expanding and farming as a livelihood activity no longer fetching the amount of money as it was in the past, many households cannot cope and hence increasing the possibility of chronic poverty.

Tobacco growing is one of the livelihood activities most common to Kibaale district and yields some income but is more time consuming than food crop farming. Tobacco grows for almost all the year and the majority of farmers engage in its cultivation at the expense of growing other food crops ending up in a food insecurity situation at the household level. During the tobacco-growing season, school-going children are withdrawn from school to attend to tobacco and upland rice growing. This practice leads to disadvantages in children’s academic performance at school thus ending up with poor grades.

It is important to note that tobacco has an effect on the environment because of cutting down forests. This has led to Kibaale district authorities to appeal to tobacco buying companies, such as British American Tobacco (U) Company (B.A.T.U) to encourage afforestation activities so that when tobacco farmers cut down trees for curing tobacco, planting more trees would replace the dwindling forest resources. The multi-national tobacco corporation, such as the British American Tobacco (U) Company (B.A.T.U) seems to affect the livelihood patterns of Kibaale district, both negatively and positively. In addition, tobacco growing is a health hazard to both the farmers and the environment. Local leaders, especially the king of Bunyoro, Omukama Iguru has vehemently campaigning against the growing of tobacco because, according to reports, tobacco is not profitable to the Banyoro people but only to the corporate gains. Omukama Iguru said,

> “Tobacco has deeply affected my subjects especially in environmental degradation and reduction in human health. It reduces our development potential…Tobacco growing is time consuming, contributes to air, water and soil pollution, degrades the environment besides being of little economic gain.” (The Daily Monitor Newspaper, April 8, 2005).

Even though the British American Tobacco (B.A.T.U) company claims to contribute to poverty eradication, instead farmer’s livelihoods seem to have dwindled instead of improving. For example, in 2004, Bunyoro tobacco farmers signed a contract to grow tobacco for B.A.T.U in return for loans to buy fertilizers and other farm supplies from the company. However, due to price fluctuations on the international market, the company defaulted on the contract. It did not buy farmers produce, leading to serious protests by farmers. Given that the tobacco produced was sitting in farmers stores, the B.A.T.U Company gave different explanations as to why the company had not fulfilled contractual obligations. The explanations given all aimed at preserving the company's profits and in the process passing on the losses to the farmers. Details of the conflict and exploitation are visible in the newspaper reports (The Monitor reports of April 5, 2005; February 22, 2005; January12, 2005; December 17, 2004; The New Vision reports of February 5, 14 and 18 and April 5 and 7, 2005; The East African report of March 14, 2005).

What is troubling to the tobacco farmers is how the national political leadership allows the exploitation of tobacco farmers just because B.A.T.U Company pays tax to the Uganda government – 40 billion Uganda shillings ($23.4 million) or 2.3% of the national taxes collection.[4] Aggrieved that authorities were not addressing their concerns, about 2000 farmers under their local association sued B.A.T.U for the misery the company has caused to the people. The President of the Republic of Uganda, on a four-day poverty eradication tour to the region in April 2005, "warned Members of Parliament (MPs), district councils and local politicians against interfering with the operations of B.A.T.U Company in Bunyoro."[5] The President argued that B.A.T.U investments had boosted the economy through its contribution of over U$23.4m (sh40b) in taxes annually. The President noted that MPs should not encourage tobacco farmers in the region to confront B.A.T.U for failure to buy their tobacco (Kyetume, 2005). The president's action clearly shows how weak states operate at the whims of corporate interests to impoverish rural voiceless farmers (Migdal, 1988; Olukoshi, 1996). Instead of government protecting the poor farmers, it sides with private corporate organizations. With government protection of corporate interests, livelihood patterns tumble further into poverty without protection from the state. Thus, given what farmers go through, brewing becomes a popular activity because of its predictability in terms of market. In case urban traders offer low prices, local traders can buy and sale locally. With coffee almost wiped by coffee wilt disease and tobacco no longer profitable, farmers responded by adopting local brewing as an alternative.

In Kyenjojo district, the majority of residents, like Bushenyi and Kibaale, are also involved in subsistence agriculture. The district has two main agricultural zones that is, Mwenge County where farming concentrates on tea growing, and mixed farming while Kyaka County is known for beef and cereal production. This study was done in Butiiti sub county, Mwenge County, where farmers mainly grow banana, groundnuts, and poultry. There are residents who are cultivators particularly coffee and bananas ('Ndizi' or 'Kalire' in Kibaale) used to prepare Waragi (Crude local gin). This does not imply that residents in Kyenjojo district are large-scale farmers but rather they are subsistence farmers with average garden of about 0.5 acres per household where they obtain enough food for family consumption and surplus for sale.

While others depend on multi-national companies for employment, such as Mukwano industries (owning Rwenzori Commodities Company Ltd), other residents work as casual laborers on other small out grower tea farmers. There are of course limited employment opportunities that offer better pay hence making most residents to depend on family gardens. The majority of the residents in Kinyantale village, for example, work in the neighboring Mukwano tea estate by picking tea, where they have enlisted as causal laborers.

In Kyenjojo district, being a relatively new district, that is, created in December 2000, most of the livelihood changes relate to large-scale village penetration by multinational corporations and capitalistic ventures, especially tea growing companies and organizations. Moreover, because of stability in governance, markets are now operational, and farmers are able to move and sell their produce. It is easy for farmers who are within the tea estate neighborhood to sell farm produce to the tea estate workers. Tea estates have brought together people who are not resident in the village such the Bakiga, Banyarwanda and even the Congolese. In Kinyantale village, I observed several workers camps spread over surrounding villages.

In one of the meetings with residents in Kinyantale village, Kyenjojo district, I asked men what they thought are the factors that favor residents to engage in livelihood activities in their village. The majority of them responded by pointing to the existence of the plantation. This implied that most livelihood activities and strategy change tend to revolve around working in the tea estate or plantation. However, not everyone shared this opinion. Some respondents look at the tea estate in the village as a symbol of success while others look at it as a symbol of poverty, suffering, destitution, and hunger. This is because village residents spend much of their time working in the tea plantation, with very little wages that do not compensate for their energy.

The positive changes, among others, include employment opportunities for the youth in the area. This in a way has reduced the incidence of redundancy and unemployment among the youth, which, some respondents argued, bred acts of "theft of property." Other new positive changes include visible developments, such as iron-

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4 See The Monitor Newspaper report, titled "Top 300 Taxpayers: Shell, MTN, UBL Lead the Pack" Tuesday 30 August 2005 and The New vision Newspaper report, titled "Uganda's Top 1,000 Taxpayers 2004/5" Sunday September 11, 2005.

5 See The New Vision report titled, "Museveni warns legislators on BAT" by Kyetume Kasanga, Saturday, April 30th, 2005

roofed houses financed by incomes derived from employment in the tea estates, access to essential commodities due to improved rural road networks, and increase in the number of tea farmers from 12 to about 140 in a short time due to government campaign to grow more tea. Thus, the coming of Mukwano Tea Estates to the area brought many changes in peoples livelihoods. The women in the FGD meeting in Kinyantale village echoed similar concerns about the existence of the tea plantation in their village. I asked them about the changes experienced since the rehabilitation of the tea plantation in the village in comparison to their livelihoods before and today. They view the coming of the tea estates as having encouraged people to work hard and build iron-roofed compared to the grass-thatched houses.

Respondents still think of the unexciting days in the past, before the rehabilitation of Mukwano tea estates when most people would only work in their gardens, with nostalgia. They joked about how a person would be recognized from afar by his or her attire since many could afford only one outfit. Many respondents mentioned changes in the health status. Respondents argued that most people used to fall sick frequently because they could not get proper treatment but the rate has reduced since malaria treatment is easy to access. The surrounding overgrown tea plants were breeding grounds for mosquitoes. Today, it is easy to be involved in an activity that easily guarantees a person some future income while lacking a meaningful livelihood activity makes people become redundant. Many people would become addicted to drinking local gin called Waragi in the past but now everyone thinks of doing some more work. These include projects such as growing cash crops like tea and Eucalyptus trees, a quick maturing hardwood tree that is on high demand in tea factories in the district. The road networks since the early 2000s make it easier, compared to 10 to 20 years ago, for the residents to sell their produce to the merchants from the nearby Kyenjojo and Fort-Portal towns, who have penetrated the interior of the once remote areas.

However, evidence from the district indicates that residents employed in tea estates earn very low wages. In brief, men and women, and sometimes including the youth and children, pay less attention to their own gardens to perform paid temporary labor for the multinational companies that own the plantations. These multinationals do not pay well (about U$21.00 per month) working from 7:00 am to 5:00 pm or sometimes 5:30 pm in the evening. There is no guarantee that workers will get all the money at the end of the month because of the wage advances in form of food and other essentials, such as salt and sugar advanced to workers at the market rate charges. The lack of a government employment policy and absence of functioning labor laws or even functioning trade unions for collective bargaining purposes further compounds the problem of workers protection and safety.

More people are attracted to abandon their family gardens for this employment to be able to buy household essential items like sugar and salt. Though there is cash payment at the end of the month, there is a looming danger of dependence and destitution setting in after a period since it is all from "hand to mouth" without a surplus for saving.

In Kayanga village unlike in Kinyantale village, the local residents have been using the nearby Kalinzu government forest reserve for a long time. It was a source of materials, such as firewood and building poles, food like mushrooms, honey, medicinal plants, and fruits; and for commercial purposes such as lumbering done by Kalinzu sawmills. In the past before SAPs implementtation, whenever residents were in need of the above items, it was easier to obtain them from the forest. However, with the revival and subsequent privatization of forest reserves and management in the country, restrictions placed on forest reserve limits how local residents use the natural resources. Coupled with the government privatization program of government forest services since the late 1990s, especially the secondary forests managed under the decentralized districts, only firms or individuals with licenses can use the forests. Using this system, government tenders and grants licenses for harvesting forest trees to supply the ever-increasing urban markets like Kampala City, with the ever-expanding construction sector.

Residents of Kayanga village explained to me that without notice, residents were informed that they could no longer use the forest resources at will, except after seeking permission from the individual/firm that won the tender. This was also at a time when the government prohibited harvest of forest products, especially timber. The restrictions, implemented in the late 1990 implied that people could not even hunt down vermin such as monkeys, elephants and baboons that constantly destroyed their crops. The long-term impact of access to Kalinzu forest was the continued destruction of residents' crops causing food insecurity and in the process affecting livelihood patterns. Thus Kalinzu forest reserve, a public good until then, was eventually turned into a private good without due regard to resident around the forest. Almost all residents interviewed felt the impact of the privatization and therefore the restrictions imposed on exploitation of the forest resources. One local authority official, under whose jurisdiction part of Kalinzu Forest falls explains,

> "Most people around the forest were lumbers while others were wood buyers or businessmen dealing in timber. Today there is a policy forbidding everybody from going to the forest, except those with licenses. Formally, local residents would go any time and cut poles for fencing their farms (using barbed wire). However, these days even getting, for example,

mushrooms, just picking those mushrooms that grow in the wilderness, you must get a license. Some other people who were engaged in such activities did not have enough money to buy license".

The quote above explain the misery people have endured over the years under neo-liberal economic policies, especially privatization, even though there are instances where positive outcomes have been observed, especially tea farming in rural areas. The growing tea industry, also a result of neo-liberalism results in contradictory positive and negative consequences, that is, reduced poverty or misery to some people but indirectly increased it to others. This is similar, though in a different setting with what Leach et al. (1999) found in leaf gathering, organized in hierarchical manner and embedded with power relations in Ghana. The collection of leaves becomes a center of hierarchical negotiations. While on non-governmental reserves, leaves are usually a common property of villagers, with user rights apportioned depending on village membership; on the government controlled reserve, user rights depends on the Forest Department's permit system (Leach et al.,1999:235-6). Kalinzu Forest Reserve case is an indicator of how privatization, a SAP requirement has serious consequences to people's livelihoods.

Thus, the current livelihood situation in three districts is determined by several factors. These include, but are not limited to, climate and natural hazards or events externally controlled, such as government and donor intervention that is temporary, given the number of projects and interventions over time, access to market opportunities, and reliance on cash and food crops that are perennial with less incomes in return. It is most likely that people affected by unexpected natural hazard may become very desperate for survival, end up being very poor, and taken advantage of by those in authority, as they look for survival. To compound it all, multi-national corporations take advantage of the poor people's livelihood conditions and exploit the poor by overworking them and offering very low wages or over engaging them with such perennial crops without a chance for them to look for an alternative livelihood strategy.

## CONCLUSION

This paper has shown that different livelihood activities and patterns among rural areas appear changing because of different reasons. One reason is implementtation of SAPs that increased visibility of multi-national corporation penetration of the rural areas and patterning livelihoods. As noted earlier on, neo-liberal policies implemented by the international financial institutions have had contradictory impacts on poverty reduction plans. For example, the need for an investment atmosphere in Uganda has led local and foreign investors into the tea industry that provides employment opportunities and a cash economy in rural areas. With such serendipitous opportunity, rural residents are able to construct durable residential homes. With donor support, infrastructures such as health care centers, roads, and schools have sprung up, giving an opportunity to rural residents an avenue to fight poverty.

Such opportunities come with costs that, instead of reducing poverty, it can sometimes exacerbate it. For example, recent studies show that poverty increased from 35 to 38% (UBOS, 2003). Secondly, heavy dependence on donor funding, with about 52% of Uganda's budget supported by donors may weaken local and national state capacities enforce development projects that observe development ethics and are beneficial to the people. Thirdly, with increased infrastructure such as rural feeder road networks, there is a danger of multinational corporations and companies penetrating rural areas, which instead of reducing poverty, exacerbate it through exploitation of labor. For example, Rwenzori Commodities Ltd, a subsidiary of the Mukwano Group of companies involved in tea production in Kyenjojo district pay about U$0.58 per day to a tea picker working from 8 o'clock in the morning to 5 o'clock in the evening.[6] The Uganda labor laws, almost suspended to attract investors, leave no opportunity to the poor to seek redress in case of exploitative multinational corporations. Similarly, there are problems of local elites developing corrupt tendencies, such colluding with local investors to scuttle the intentions of the 'development projects' implemented under SAPs. Thus, unknown to such loopholes, the rural dwellers livelihoods may dwindle further into poverty even though there are some flickers of hope for the better. This study documents how ethics in international development, when ignored, can have very detrimental to the local people's livelihoods, even though the implementation if SAPs has contradictory consequences.

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[6] For example, a bar of soap costs about $1.00 and a bottle of beer cost about $0.94. This implies that it would take more time for one person to provide for a family of three people while working in a tea plantation.

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