

MAINSTREAMING ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERNS INTO THE POLICIES, PLANS AND PROGRAMMES OF THE UGANDA POLICE FORCE

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Introduction

Not long ago, police and environment personnel were regarded as strange bedfellows, not only in this country but the world over. With police handling violent crimes such as murders, robberies and rapes, while environment agencies such as NEMA are busy solving environmental problems. This is attributed to the different cultures, priorities, limited sharing of information between the two institutions among other factors. You will probably agree with me that times have changed and it has been increasingly realized that environmental crime is a threat to public safety and security.

Therefore, the Police as the institution mandated to maintain law and order and in particular the CID, the principle agency responsible for investigating all criminal cases in the country including those of environmental nature, has a central role to play in containing environmental crimes. To effectively play this role environmental concerns must be fully mainstreamed into the policies, plans and programmes of the Uganda Police Force.

What is environmental mainstreaming?

Environmental Mainstreaming occurs when conservation and the sustainable use of environment and natural resources is integrated into different levels of government, institutional or establishment legislations, policies, plans and programmes and relevant actions are taken at the national, sectoral, local and community levels to support their implementation.

Therefore environmental mainstreaming in the Police implies incorporating environmental concerns in the planning process, policy formulation and programmes of the police and taking relevant action including budget to support their implementation. To the Police Force it implies understanding the public safety-environmental implications of not taking the right actions and adapting the core activities of the police force with the realities of those issues.

Roles and Responsibilities of the Police in Environment Management

- Detection and investigation and causing prosecution of environmental crimes in courts of law;
- Monitoring and enforcement of compliance to environmental laws, regulations and standards such as effecting evictions from sensitive ecosystems like wetlands, river banks and lake shores;
- Developing enforcement strategies against environmental crimes;
- Arresting of environmental offenders, just like other criminals;
- Increasing awareness of environmental crimes in the country and their threat to public peace and security;
- Sensitizing and raising the awareness of all the Uganda Police staff on general environmental issues including environmental crime as a threat to public safety;
- Strengthening National and International linkages in Environment and Natural Resource Management and exchanging information with NEMA, the Directorate of Public Prosecution (DPP), and other partner organizations;
- Mainstreaming environmental concerns in the planning process, policy formulation and implementation of the Uganda Police Force programs;
- Developing guidelines for investigation and prosecution of environmental crimes

Key Principals of Mainstreaming

- (i) Understanding / being aware of the impact of environmental crimes on public safety and security and the development process in general;
- (ii) Identifying focused entry points;
- (iii) Working within existing structures and strategies;
- (iv) Working to your comparative advantages;
- (v) Identifying and working through strategic partnerships; i.e. NEMA, NGOs, Local authorities, Communities, the public etc.
- (vi) Developing environmental specific plans (what is the environmental plan of the police force?);
- (vii) Identify resource requirements; and
- (viii) Mobilize resources and implement planned activities

Key questions to ask in mainstreaming environmental concerns in Police

To help the Police Force to determine how and where environmental issues should be addressed in her policies, plans and programmes, the following key questions have been raised;

- (i) What is the relationship between environment and public peace, safety and security?
- (ii) How does this relationship affect the maintenance of law and order?
- (iii) Is this relationship understood and addressed at all levels of activity in the police force?
- (iv) What is the current environmental performance of the Uganda Police?
- (v) What are the main environmental impacts of Police activities in the country?
- (vi) What are the environmental impacts of not acting?
- (vii) How can the environmental impacts of the Police activities be taken into account?
- (viii) What opportunities exist within the Police framework to enhance sustainable environmental management?
- (ix) How might the ignoring of environmental concerns undermine the vision, objectives and the targets of the Uganda Police (maintenance of law and order)?
- (x) What are the environmental impacts of the current policies, plans and programmes of the Police Force?

Appropriately addressing these questions will give a way forward to the challenge of maintaining a safe and secure environment in an integrated and sustainable manner to serve the needs of the present and future generations in the Police Force.

Way forward

While we recognize that there are differences in our mandates (NEMA, Greenwatch and the Police) we also realize that we have so many common concerns regarding threats to the environment, public safety and security and thus shared goals. It is therefore important that we work more closely together in defining problems, identifying solutions and implementing joint initiatives.

- We need to develop an integrated plan of action in order to ensure that social, economic, environmental and technical dimensions are taken into account in the maintenance of public safety and security and investigation of crimes.
- Need to develop a sustainable surveillance and monitoring system in the field of environmental management. Monitoring indicators should be developed and popularized to track changes and to assess the effectiveness of our interventions. We should therefore intensify our efforts to gather environmental crime related data, exchange and share information.
- It has become widely accepted that 'indicators of enforcement' will play a key role in ensuring that the management of the environment is

sustainable. Therefore, it is of critical importance that you strengthen the environmental information management system (storing, processing and dissemination of data to all users).

- Need to integrate environmental concerns in the plans and policy formulation of the Police. We also need to regularly review these policies, plans and institutional frameworks to ensure relevance and adherence to our shared goals.
- In your crime investigation function you need to keep abreast with best environmental practices. To tackle the specifically environment-related grievances, the preparedness and capacity of the police force to fight environment specific violations and crimes need to be developed.
- The curricula of the Police Training Colleges need to be expanded to include environmental concerns.

Indicators of Environmental Mainstreaming into the Uganda Police Force

The extent of environmental mainstreaming can be assessed basing on the following monitoring indicators;

- Curriculum in the Police training colleges having environmental concerns/issues;
- Percentage of the Police budget allocation to environmental concerns;
- Police personnel specifically designated to handle environmental concerns;
- Creation of specialized units in the Police force handling environmental issues e.g. environmental squad, environmental desk etc;
- Number of environmental crimes reported to police, investigated and prosecuted in courts of law;
- Number of Police Officers who have attended environmental awareness and capacity building workshops and seminars;
- Number of environmental management capacity building initiatives organized by the Police;
- Creation of an environmental data bank in the Police.
- Environmental concerns being incorporated into the Police training