



# THE DARKER SIDE OF GREEN

## PLANTATION FORESTRY AND CARBON VIOLENCE IN UGANDA

*THE CASE OF GREEN RESOURCES' FORESTRY-BASED CARBON MARKETS*

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Seedling nursery at Bukaleba. © Kristen Lyons, 2012

## Executive Summary

In recent years, there has been a significant trend toward land acquisition in developing countries, establishing forestry plantations for offsetting carbon pollution generated in the Global North. Badged as “green economic development,” global carbon markets are often championed not only as solutions to climate change, but as drivers of positive development outcomes for local communities. But there is mounting evidence that these corporate land acquisitions for climate change mitigation—including forestry plantations—severely compromise not only local ecologies but also the livelihoods of the some of the world’s most vulnerable people living at subsistence level in rural areas in developing countries.

This report examines the acquisition of land in Uganda by Green Resources, a Norwegian-registered plantation forestry company. Green Resources produces saw log timber and charcoal in Mozambique, Tanzania, and Uganda, and receives carbon-offset revenue from a number of its plantation forestry operations. This report focuses specifically on the company’s activities in Uganda, where it holds two licenses over 11,864 hectares of the government-owned Central Forest Reserve, land that villagers historically had access to grow food, graze animals, and engage in cultural practices.

Under the licensed land agreement between Uganda’s government and Green Resources, upwards of 8,000 people face profound disruptions to their livelihoods, including many experiencing forced evictions. Villagers across Green Resources’ two acquisitions in Uganda, at Bukaleba and Kaching Central Forest Reserves, report being denied access to land vital for growing food and grazing livestock, as well as collecting forest resources central to their livelihoods. Many also describe the corporate pollution of land and waterways by agrochemicals used in forestry plantations, resulting in crop losses and livestock deaths. Many of those evicted, as well as those seeking to use land now licensed to Green Resources, report being subjected to physical violence at the hands of the police. They also allege that private security forces have been involved in this criminal behavior, although the role of Green Resources itself is not known.

This report aims to elevate the voices of villagers who have been profoundly impacted by Green Resources’ practices on traditional lands, and who describe themselves as having no-one to turn to for solutions, or to bear witness to their marginalization from access to food, livelihoods, cultural sites, security, and so much more. This report introduces the term “carbon violence”

to give context to the diversity of structural, social, political, economic, and cultural harms connected with the way carbon markets have evolved, and explores Green Resources' role in the carbon violence experienced by the villagers and the local ecosystems they inhabit. Evidence presented demonstrates how subsistence farmers and poor communities carry heavy costs associated with the expansion of forestry plantations and global carbon markets.

While Green Resources does engage in some community development activities, these are largely disconnected from local villagers' needs and aspirations. This report summarizes the findings of field research carried out in 2012 and 2013 including interviews with 152 affected villagers across the two study sites, company and government employees or representatives and documented evidence and reports. The findings highlight that access to land to produce food is the most pressing issue, yet this is an issue Green Resources has done little to address. The loss of access to land and sustainable livelihoods for some of the world's most vulnerable populations is both unjust and unacceptable—particularly when rural people in Uganda contribute little to carbon emissions.

On the basis of these findings, this report calls for: (1) an investigation into third party certification, monitoring and compliance mechanisms related to the conduct of Green Resources; (2) investors and buyers of Green Resources carbon credits to hold the company to account to its social and environmental responsibilities; (3) reforms to global plantation forestry and carbon markets to alleviate the burden subsistence farmers currently carry, including their experience of direct and structural forms of violence; (4) on-going global actions to establish sustainable energy futures, including rapid expansion in renewable energy options, thereby reducing global greenhouse gas emissions and the subsequent reliance on offset initiatives.

## Introduction

In the context of a climate crisis, international development and trade has oriented towards the “green economy” strategy, which places an economic value on what the Earth “does” for humans, detachedly called “ecosystem services.” Those favoring the notion of “commoditizing” not only material goods such as water and wood, but the *processes* of nature, such as a forest's ability to capture and store carbon, profess that humans' value only that which can be priced in the marketplace—and thereby only by putting a price on the natural world, it can be “saved.”<sup>1</sup> Amongst a suite of “green economy” initiatives sit carbon-offset projects. In the case of

carbon markets, the green economy measures the potential amount of carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) a forest can sequester, and places a dollar value upon that forest “service,” which then assumes value as a carbon credit, issued or sold to governments and industry to offset their pollution.

Though the “green economy” is criticized by many non-governmental organizations (NGOs) as a sort of “carbon pollution ponzi scheme” that harms rather than protects Indigenous and forest peoples, it is widely championed by governments, industry, the United Nations, and some NGOs as a “win-win-win,” by conferring social, economic and environmental benefits to communities living in these carbon credit project areas. These projects often bond investors from the Global North with smallholder farmers in the Global South. Frequently touted as a good news story, many private sector actors now showcase carbon offsets as part of their commitment to corporate social and environmental responsibility. The premise of carbon offset, or carbon trading, is that greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions occurring in one part of the world can be offset by activities that sequester, or absorb, carbon, in other parts of the world. But is it all too good to be true?

The Norwegian-registered plantation forestry company, Green Resources, is a major actor in this new business. In recent years, Green Resources has extended its control over a vast area of land and is reportedly the largest plantation forestry company on the African continent (outside South Africa), with plantations in Mozambique, Tanzania, and Uganda.<sup>2</sup> Green Resources claims to have planted more trees than any other private company in the last 10 years, with over 40,000 hectares of standing plantation forestry, and to have invested over \$125 million in tree planting in Africa.<sup>3</sup> It also claims to be one of the first international companies to have received carbon revenue from the sale of carbon credits from its plantation forests, based on the absorption of CO<sub>2</sub> (and other polluting greenhouse gases).<sup>4</sup>

In Uganda, the company has obtained 50-year licenses to engage in plantation forestry in two Central Forest Reserves, covering an area of 11,864 hectares. According to Green Resources, the objective of the project is to “contribute to mitigating climate change ... and contributing to sustainable environmental management, community development and poverty alleviation in Uganda.”<sup>5</sup>

While there are various forms of carbon and forest offset projects including REDD+, the Clean Development Mechanism and Voluntary Carbon Markets, the analysis here is focused on the latter two where Green Resources is engaged. Analysis includes a focus on national and



Green Resources' truck transporting logged timber. © Kristen Lyons, 2012

international governance mechanisms, including the National Forestry Policy and New National Land Policy (Uganda), the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC), as well as broader mandates that bind countries to the “green economy” and foreign investment from national governments (including Uganda’s), the United Nations, the World Bank, etc.

This report summarizes the findings of field research carried out in 2012 and 2013, focusing on the impacts on local livelihoods arising from the acquisition of land for plantation forestry by Green Resources. It aims to give voice to the villagers who have been affected by the project and ascertain how, and to what extent, the activities of the company have impacted local communities.

## Background

Green Resources started under the name Fjordgløtt in 1995, and was later renamed Tree Farms, before adopting its current name in 2007.<sup>6</sup> Green Resources is connected to a broad financialization of forestry. In recent decades, finance companies and investors have identified land, agriculture, forestry and food as investment opportunities.<sup>7</sup> This trend by institutional investors to actively seek new markets in which

to sink capital in the pursuit of secure investment returns has seen international land acquisitions on a grand scale.<sup>8</sup>

Mr. Mads Aspren is both the company’s founder and current CEO. Green Resources’ major shareholders include investment firms such as Phaunos Timber Fund (27%), New Africa (19%), Steinerud (8%), Macama (7%), SBL Direct Investments Ltd (6%), Verbena Investment Ltd (5%), and TRG (5%).<sup>9</sup> Other financiers include the World Bank’s International Finance Corporation, the Norwegian Investment Fund for Developing Countries (Norfund), which has provided \$7million in loans to Green Resources, as well as an additional \$25million in collaboration with the Finnish Development Finance Institution (Finnfund).<sup>10</sup>

Green Resources is reportedly the largest plantation forestry, carbon offset, forest products, and renewable energy company (outside South Africa) operating on the African continent. The company released 17.8 million new shares in May 2014, alongside its acquisition of Global Solidarity Forest Fund (GSFF), a move that further consolidated its dominance in the African forestry sector.<sup>11</sup>

Green Resources outlines broad goals related to conservation and reforestation. It claims to contribute to climate change mitigation, while meeting the growing demand for wood prod-

ucts from well managed forestry plantations, as well as making a contribution to sustainable environmental management, community development, and poverty alleviation.<sup>12</sup>

Green Resources has obtained licenses from the National Forestry Authority (NFA) to engage in plantation forestry in two Central Forest Reserves in Uganda; the Bukaleba Forest Reserve in Mayuge District (eastern Uganda) in 1996, and the Kachung Forest Reserve in Dokolo District (northern Uganda) in 1999. At Bukaleba, Green Resources project activity includes reforestation on 5,780 hectares of so-called 'degraded' land (designated by the NFA), as well as being responsible for the maintenance of 3,385 hectares of land for conservation purposes. Meanwhile at Kachung, project activity includes the establishment and management of exotic and indigenous afforestation on approximately 2,099 hectares of so-called 'degraded' grass and shrub land.

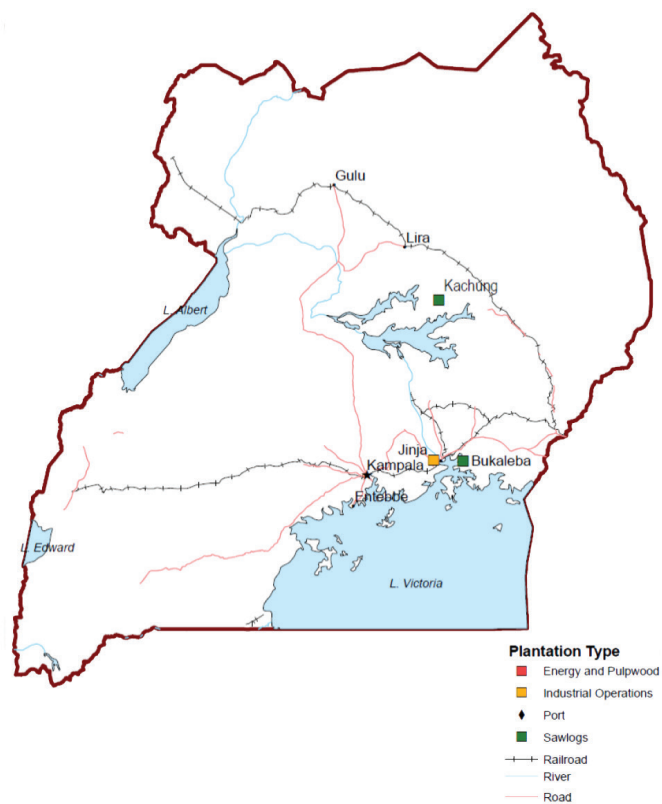
The Forest Stewardship Council (FSC), which has previously come under intense scrutiny and legal action for its land and use rights standards and practices,<sup>13</sup> certified the Bukaleba plantation. The plantation was also validated and verified as an Afforestation and Reforestation project under the Verified Carbon Standard in 2012.<sup>14</sup> High levels of tension and conflict in the four villages within the company license area are likely connected to the failure to obtain additional verifications at the Bukaleba site. However, with lower levels of conflict at the Kachung plantation, (largely due to villages being located outside of the forest reserve) Green Resources has been successful in obtaining additional verifications, including recognition as a Clean Development Mechanism (CDM) project, and was validated under the Climate Community and Biodiversity Standard (CCBS) in 2011. Kachung's first carbon credits were purchased by the Swedish Energy Agency, with carbon contracts between 2012 and 2032 valued at \$4 million.<sup>15</sup>

The scale of impact associated with Green Resources arrival in Uganda is significant. Prior investigation into this company has been limited, with the exception of the Norwegian organization, The Future in Our Hands (*Framtiden i våre hender*), some journalistic reports in the Ugandan media and a few academic studies,<sup>16</sup> making it difficult to obtain an accurate account of the number of people directly affected, though estimates vary between 8,000 to 40,000 people.<sup>17</sup> There are 14 villages directly adjacent to the company license area at Kachung Central

Forest. Meanwhile at Bukaleba Central Forest, there are four villages that remain located *within* the license area, and at least 12 adjacent to the land licensed to the company.<sup>18</sup>

Affected villages are traditionally dependent on shifting cultivation and small-scale subsistence farming and fishing for their livelihoods. The form of subsistence agriculture that farmers practice relies mostly on human labor (non mechanized), and cultivated crops include beans, pigeon peas, groundnuts, cassava, sweet potato, millet, maize, sorghum, and rice. A small number of farmers are also engaged in some cash crop production, including *sim sim* (sesame), sunflower, cotton, tobacco, shea butter (in Kachung), and sugar cane (in Bukaleba). Rates of poverty are high and are associated with poor health outcomes and low life expectancy. There are also high levels of illiteracy and poor access to services, including safe water and sanitation, and limited health and educational services.

**FIGURE 1: MAP OF UGANDA, SHOWING BUKALEBA AND KACHUNG LICENSE AREAS (Source: Green Resources <http://www.greenresources.no/Plantations/Uganda.aspx> accessed 11 August 2014)**



## BOX 1: UGANDA COMMITS TO CARBON MARKETS

In Uganda, a number of historical and policy drivers have enabled Green Resources' plantation forestry and carbon offset activities. A brief background is provided here to understand the contemporary situation, including the transition from *government management* of land to a range of new actors, including the private sector and international donors:

- Uganda was declared a British protectorate in 1894. Colonial rule was effective in disrupting customary land tenure. The Buganda Agreement (1900), for example, introduced *mailo*, native freehold, leasehold, and Crown forms of land ownership, and enabled “waste and uncultivated land” to be allocated to non-Africans. Despite increasing demands from foreign interests, a number of laws were introduced to constrain the foreign acquisition of land, demonstrating the colonial government's resistance to foreign land speculation.<sup>19</sup>
- Continuing in the post-colonial period, a combination of legislative change and political instability extended the privatization of land. The *Crown Act* of 1962, for example, converted Crown land into public land, with leaseholds granted for up to 99 years.<sup>20</sup> Meanwhile, the 1962 *Public Land Act* and the 1969 *Public Lands Act* enabled farmers to deforest unoccupied lands for agricultural purposes without prior consent from the government.<sup>21</sup> Farmers were also encouraged to occupy land, including forested land, to improve household self-sufficiency so as to reduce pressure upon the failing state.
- The Idi Amin Dada government (1971-1979) also re-distributed portions of protected areas to communities.<sup>22</sup> Central Forest Reserves were among land holdings re-distributed. For example, the Amin Government established a beef project in the Bukaleba Central Forest Reserve in 1974, encouraging people to live and work in what is now allegedly part of Green Resources' licence area.<sup>23</sup>
- By the 1990s, land and natural resource laws reflected the growing government commitment to privatize public lands and attract foreign investment. The 1993 *Tree Planting Act*, for example, enabled investors to acquire land within forest reserves to establish forestry plantations. The privatization of public lands was also enabled through the *National Forestry Policy* (2001) and the *National Forestry and Tree Planting Act* (2003), both of which articulate a commitment to the privatization of Uganda's forestry sector.<sup>24</sup> The *New Land Policy* (2011) also grants title to *citizens*—not the state—thereby exercising private sovereignty over land.
- Reflecting this policy shift, representatives from National Forestry Authority (NFA) and the National Environmental Management Authority (NEMA), describe public/private collaborations, including those related to forests and forestry plantations, as central to green development in Uganda. One NFA representative described the importance of such partnerships: “if we don't have international investment, we will lose our forests,” and that “partnership with the private sector is a means of reforesting the country.”<sup>25</sup> In addition to driving re-afforestation, international investment is also heralded as creating a multiplier effect, including tax revenue and local infrastructure, such as roads, schools and hospitals.
- In contrast, local community representatives have raised concerns over this policy. One local leader from Dokolo district in northern Uganda stressed, for instance, that foreign investment activities should always be “win/win,” explaining that foreign investment “must also benefit local people, not just the investor.”<sup>26</sup>



## The New Carbon Violence

There is a long history of violence associated with international development, including “green” development projects. Such violence has been understood in different ways, including as both *direct*, and *structural* violence. *Carbon violence* characterizes both the direct and structural violence that has arisen from carbon market schemes.



Glyphosate, a herbicide used at the seedling nursery Bukaleba.  
© Kristen Lyons, 2012

Green development, including the expanding plantation forestry and carbon markets detailed in this report, is associated with *direct* forms of violence and intimidation, including forced evictions, destruction of crops, and pollution of lakes with agrochemicals, as documented below. A striking feature of the expanding plantation forestry and carbon markets is their link to *structural* violence that is tied to local histories, as well as the social and political relationships in which commodities (including timber and

carbon) are produced and traded. These contexts provide the conditions in which new forms of resource and land constraints are imposed upon local villagers, thereby further marginalizing life and livelihoods.

While the displacement of local and Indigenous peoples is nothing new, this “financialization” of forestry, food, and farming signifies a new era of land acquisition, driven by the interests of capital accumulation. While banks and other financial institutions have a history of providing capital to the rural sector in both developed and developing countries, their direct engagement in land ownership is a recent phenomenon.<sup>27</sup>

A growing number of activists, advocacy groups, and researchers are exposing the violence often associated with the acquisition of land, including displacement of local and Indigenous peoples;<sup>28</sup> though less well understood have been the diverse and specific forms of violence associated with the carbon economy documented in this report.

## A History of Violent Evictions

The eviction of people from the land began prior to the arrival of Green Resources, driven in part by national policies to facilitate the privatization and commodification of natural resources and land (see Box 1). There are various accounts of eviction at both sites that span over four decades, beginning in the 1980s and early 1990s, coinciding with the introduction of nationwide policy driving the privatization of land for reforestation. While this policy shift legitimized the exclusion of agriculture and other subsistence farming activities previously permitted on central government land, it created ambiguity about local people’s access and use rights. For example, national land laws recognize local people’s customary, user and access rights, yet corporate land licenses provide a legal mandate to enforce the protection of Green Resources’ borders from human activity.

Community members describe a mix of government employees, as well as the army, military, and police, as responsible for forced evictions on land now licensed to Green Resources. While local villagers were not clear on who was driving the eviction processes, they were unified in their descriptions of it as a distressing and life-changing event, backed by one local government representative who described it as a “violent take-over of land,”<sup>29</sup> with people forcibly removed from land vital for their livelihoods.

At Kachung and Bukaleba Central Forest Reserves, community members and local leaders recounted stories of people being “chased away” and “thrown out,” thereby making way for private investors. One woman described

her family's experience of having their livelihood activities extinguished from the land in the 1990s: "We were scared, fearing we would be put in prison. We thought if we resisted we would be punished, so we surrendered our crops in fear."<sup>30</sup>

Many community members accused the police, National Forestry Authority staff, and later company staff, as using extreme force, especially against those people who wished to stay. In one village, community members described a violent eviction process that was driven by "people with guns."<sup>31</sup>

## Green Resources Continues the Evictions

In addition to the enclosures predating Green Resources' tenure, recent accounts of forced relocations are directly linked to expansion of the companies' plantation activities. Some villagers shared accounts of their homes being destroyed by company employees to make way for the establishment and recent expansion of forestry plantations. Frequently, the villagers described the forced relocation of agriculture, grazing, and other livelihood activities, including during the corporation's 2011 expansion of tree planting areas at both sites. Community members from one village reported that company staff arrived without notice, and "just started to plant trees on top of our crops ... we were evicted without discussion."<sup>32</sup>

Villagers also described an earlier arrangement with Green Resources' staff allowing them to grow food crops between the company tree seedlings—referred to locally as the *taungya* system—as now-prohibited, with their intercropped food being destroyed by company staff.<sup>33</sup> An elderly woman described this scenario, "some crops were slashed down, and they used chemicals to spray crops. Even the animals fed on the crops [that were] sprayed, have died."<sup>34</sup>

*...some crops were slashed down, and they used chemicals to spray crops. Even the animals fed on the crops [that were] sprayed, have died..*

Many people also reported having their animals that strayed into license areas, confiscated by Green Resources staff and local police officers. Local villagers contested the boundary of the license area, though some accounts report that animals were confiscated from what locals believed was community land.

There was further evidence of contestation between local villagers and Green Resources about the designation of community land. During fieldwork in 2013, for example, villagers described surveyors visiting what they believed was community land, vital and seemingly ever-shrinking commons for crops and grazing. In late 2013, the company started to plant trees on this land, destroying crops and again forcing villagers to relocate food growing elsewhere. While the company and villagers dispute the boundary of Green Resources' license area, the outcome is the same; communities already disadvantaged by repeated dislocation and dispossession are further pushed to the margins of existence as plantation forestry expands.<sup>35</sup>

One woman shared her story of being forced to abandon her crops, ultimately rendering her homeless:

*We are chased away from our garden after one season. I was growing crops and the security personnel allowed me to prepare my garden and then when it was mature, and because there were no trees growing, they slashed it down. I went to another rocky area on the hill in that area to try to grow food but my cassava dried up. Now I am living off the handouts from other neighbors in the village.<sup>36</sup>*

Green Resources has continued to expand its forestry plantations, including adding a further 530 hectares at Kachung and 889 hectares at Bukaleba during 2011/2012.<sup>37</sup> This expansion is intensifying what local villagers describe as already acute land shortages for growing food in each region. On the basis of expanding forestry plantations as well as further expansion of the borders of the company license areas, local leaders in each district described "a coming food crisis."<sup>38</sup>

Additionally, Green Resources' entry into the carbon market relies upon compliance with a number of certifications (including the Forest Stewardship Council, registration as Afforestation/ Reforestation Clean Development Mechanism (A/R CDM) at Kachung, and Verified Carbon Standard (VCS) at Bukaleba). Some company staff said these certifications required them to tighten plantation borders, including removing "encroachers" who might jeopardize company compliance. There is little doubt that Green Resources has become increasingly vigilant in protecting its borders, with one company staffer describing the company as, for a time, "sponsoring police near the forest reserve" to protect the borders of its license area.<sup>39</sup>

Demonstrating this militarization of forestry plantations, villagers reported members of their community being arrested by police and soldiers for "trespass" onto the



Growing and selling of food has become illegal in licensed areas. © Kristen Lyons, 2012

company license areas. In one focus group discussion, people reported being harassed, fined, and jailed, with a number of people mentioning they knew someone who was imprisoned for “trespass.”<sup>40</sup> This violent defense of the company’s borders is not altogether surprising, given a 2012 report by the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (NORAD) identifying the “invasion” of license areas by locals as responsible for low tree plantation growth rates.<sup>41</sup>

## Denial of Rights and Livelihoods

The privatization of forest reserves and their governance via carbon forestry mechanisms has provided a legal framework to justify the carbon violence. Green Resources’ license provides a legal mandate for the company to enforce evictions. As a result of government and later company evictions, people with historical access and use rights have been criminalized as “trespassers” and “encroachers.” Local villagers described this as leading to feelings of “isolation” and “fear.”<sup>42</sup> A number of villagers also described themselves as “non-citizens” on the basis of their loss of rights and access to service provisions other Ugandans might expect.<sup>43</sup> For villagers living within the area now licensed to Green Resources at Bukaleba, this is particularly

acute. In many respects the four villages inside Bukaleba *literally don’t exist*; with neither Green Resources nor the government recognizing responsibility for service provision and other support. Many local villagers previously generated an income through the collection of forest products from the Central Forest Reserve. In losing access rights, some local people have also lost their income, access to forest products (including medicines and firewood) as well as access to watering holes for their animals. One man, like so many others, concluded that such circumstances have made life “very dangerous,” and lamented that if the current conditions prevail “(our) life will be gone.”<sup>44</sup>

While Green Resources does provide some medical supplies to a health clinic in one village, and government community development officers describe doing “what they can” to assist villagers within the license area, on the whole, families from these villages fall through the ever-widening cracks, with poor or no vital service provisions (such as health, education, and transport), and in one village, high levels of crime and violence remain largely unchecked by police.

Company representatives expressed little tolerance for the plight of villagers. One company employee articulated, “These are poor people. So, we are trying to encourage



Cattle grazing illegally in plantation area. © Kristen Lyons, 2013

them, once they have finished their season of planting, to go back to where they came from, as much as possible. We will try everything possible to make sure they don't come back.<sup>45</sup>

The company justifies phasing out the *taungya* system on

*These are poor people. So, we are trying to encourage them, once they have finished their season of planting, to go back to where they came from, as much as possible. We will try everything possible to make sure they don't come back.*

the basis that such activities may cause leakage, or result in the company breaching carbon market certification requirements. However, it appears Green Resources applies its own rules inconsistently, creating ambiguity about the drivers of boundary enforcement. One herder found grazing cattle in mature trees in the license area, for example, explained that the company had granted his employer, a local elected representative, permission to graze in the license area.

## Disrupting Cultural Practices

Green Resources' staff and local villagers agree that sites of cultural significance exist within the area now licensed to the company, and the installation of a number of 'burial ground' signs by the company in Bukaleba in late 2013 signifies Green Resources' acknowledgement of these sacred sites. The Kachung Plantation Management Plan also identifies one cultural site in the Kachung license area.<sup>46</sup> Yet despite this, Green Resources have constrained villagers' access to some places of ancestral worship, as well as to sacrifice and other cultural sites, with one man stating despairingly "there are (now) no places to pray to our gods."<sup>47</sup>

According to some locals, the companies' activities have also resulted in the destruction of cultural sites. One man explained, "The original set up [of cultural sites] was disorganized and disturbed."<sup>48</sup> Many people lament they are no longer able to practice specific cultural events, including manhood and blessing initiations.<sup>49</sup>

In the Mayuge district, a giant Mvule tree, referred to as the "Walumbe Tree," based on the belief it houses the spirit of Walumbe (meaning death in Luganda, the local language), is an important ancestral place of worship.<sup>50</sup> The Walumbe Tree, after which the village was named, is regularly cited as an important cultural site that has been disrupted by Green Resources' plantation activities. Such disruptions, including sowing plantation timbers in close proximity to



Plantation pines growing close to the sacred Walumbe Tree.

© Peter Westoby, 2013

the Walumbe Tree, and the relocation of local communities that had previously resided nearby, have reduced villagers' access to the site.<sup>51</sup>

## Environmental Destruction

Despite engaging in forestry plantation operations in Uganda since 1996, Green Resources' Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) was only officially approved by the National Environment Management Authority, in 2008.<sup>52</sup> The EIS requires Green Resources to work according to a Forest Management Plan, as well as respecting a number of standards, including the Forest Stewardship Council's Principles and Criteria; the Saw Log Production Grant Scheme plantation guidelines for Uganda; and the Standard of the Climate, Community and Biodiversity Alliance and Forest Management Plan.<sup>53</sup> The approval of the EIS was also conditional upon a number of measures, including minimizing plant and animal biodiversity loss; planting indigenous trees to maintain natural vegetation; maintaining the reserve in a natural state; and identifying and protecting native mature trees in the plantation areas.<sup>54</sup>

Yet, according to several local environment officers, villagers, and journalists, the company is in violation of these conditions on a number of substantive issues, including, at times, encroaching on fragile ecosystems by planting trees and spraying chemicals within the buffer zone adjacent to Lake Victoria and other riparian zones. Such activities violate both the Forest Management Plan and the Project Design Document, which state the company has a requirement to maintain the natural forests, thickets and other bushes in close proximity to water bodies, including avoiding planting in buffer zones.<sup>55</sup> The importance of maintaining these ecologically sensitive zones is especially critical given the changing land use associated with the establishment of forestry plantations

in the first place from grass and shrub land to mostly exotic species—and backed by ecological survey reports which identify the importance of compliance with management and monitoring regimes.<sup>56</sup>

Villagers also described heavy chemical use as causing runoff into rivers and lakes, creating adverse downstream impacts, including killing vegetation and animals. In one village located inside the license area, locals linked the chemical use with the deaths of 32 goats and seven cattle in recent years.<sup>57</sup> In a different village, people also described the death of livestock after grazing on contaminated land that had recently been cleared of indigenous vegetation and replanted. One villager lamented that “the company doesn't care about killing animals, they only care about killing weeds.”<sup>58</sup>

Despite these outcomes, a recent monitoring of company activities shows staff have been trained in appropriate chemical handling and use,<sup>59</sup> suggesting an urgent need to investigate the effectiveness of Green Resources' chemical use training, the extent of their chemical use and compliance with the existing regulations.

There are also concerns raised related to Green Resources' reliance on only a few varieties of non-native tree species (*Pinus caribaea*, *Pinus Oocarpa* and *Eucalyptus* ssp.), planted in large monoculture stands. Local environment officers and villagers question the suitability of these species to site conditions (a requirement of the management plan)<sup>60</sup>, and raised concerns about the very small area dedicated to indigenous species (4% at Bukaleba and 1% at Kachung).<sup>61</sup> The company has been accused of clearing indigenous (and culturally significant) trees to make way for the monoculture stands—despite their protection being a condition for the project's approval.<sup>62</sup> Replacing biodiverse and resilient ecosystems with monoculture tree farms also destroys habitat for insects, birds, and other animals. One environment officer described the company's approach in establishing plantations, referring to the cycle of planting and then clear-felling monoculture plantations as imposing “environmental shock.”<sup>63</sup>

Additionally, villagers now find themselves unwillingly pushed into ecologically sensitive wetlands and riparian zones to graze their animals, where if caught, their cattle is frequently confiscated for illegal grazing, carrying fines of 20,000 Ugandan shillings (\$7.50) before animals can be returned. This scenario is contrary to that painted by a monitoring report,<sup>64</sup> which discounts the ecological damage of re-locating grazing, as well the carbon “leakage” costs of such activities.



Bore funded by Green Resources. © Kristen Lyons, 2012

## Limits of Private Sector Approaches to Community Development

Green Resources has committed that ten percent of profits will be directed towards community projects,<sup>65</sup> and as part of its community development plan, albeit with limited consultation with affected villagers, Green Resources has implemented projects related to health, education and the promotion of alternative income generation activities. Over nearly two decades of operation in Uganda, the company has rehabilitated a health centre, provided some medical supplies, it has drilled bore holes and rehabilitated spring wells, provided scholarships for young girls through the “Girls’ Education” program to attend school up to university entry point,<sup>66</sup> distributed free tree seedlings and promoted tree planting, undertaken an efficient cook stove project, established community woodlots, enabled community access to fuel-wood from thinning and pruning, and with financial support from the Foundation for Integrated Rural Development, has implemented HIV/AIDS awareness activities.<sup>67</sup> While these projects have delivered some tangible benefits for people from affected villages, this is a far cry from a comprehensive plan for development, and falls short on Green Resources’ stated objective to deliver community development and poverty alleviation.

While some community leaders affirmed the benefit of projects started as part of the company’s community

development work, most community members (and some community leaders) did not identify any of these projects as delivering the benefits most needed. One widow was echoed in agreement by several other people, saying, “What is the use of medicine if we have no land to grow food and no schools to ensure there is a future for our children?”<sup>68</sup> Overwhelmingly, villagers spoke of their loss of land as the most pressing need, albeit occasionally people talked about sanitation, health, and education. This is despite the company’s own claim that they have shifted from an earlier top-down to a more consultative approach with affected communities.<sup>69</sup>

*What is the use of medicine if we have no land to grow food and no schools to ensure there is a future for our children?*

By all accounts from villagers, the crucial issue is food and growing hunger, something the company has clearly failed to alleviate, despite promises. Since 2007, Green Resources has committed to set aside 500 hectares within their license area at Bukaleba for community land<sup>70</sup>—including for agriculture and tree planting activities—yet at the time of the field visit in September 2013, villagers had still not secured access to this land. Confusion continues



Busoga Forestry Company security uniform. © Larah Sievl-Keevers, 2013

amongst local villagers about the changeable boundary of the designated community land, as well as who is eligible to access and use this land.

Community members expressed the primary benefit rendered by Green Resources in terms of the limited employment opportunities it provides. The 2008 EIS report<sup>71</sup> documents 199 people (mostly men) employed by Green Resources, including in the activities of slashing, planting, and tree maintenance,<sup>72</sup> however numbers vary according to the source. A 2012 United Nations report documents 264 casual employees at Kachung, and the company reports employing 600 people at Bukaleba.<sup>73</sup>

According to the EIS, a minority of those employed by the company are skilled workers earning incomes of \$41.70–\$46.90 per month. The majority are unskilled laborers earning around \$26.70 per month (the equivalent of less than \$1 per day).<sup>74</sup> At one time the company mostly employed local people, though company staff described their growing frustrations with local villagers, leading to increases in the number employed from other areas.<sup>75</sup> Villagers confirm the dwindling employment opportunities and shared concerns over what they describe as the company's poor employment conditions, citing delayed salary payments and being forced to cover the costs of purchasing safety equipment (such as gumboots, safety boots, raincoats and gloves, and uniforms). While monitoring<sup>76</sup> identifies company staff

as required to wear safety equipment, it does not capture the financial burden low-paid staff are expected to carry to ensure compliance. In addition, many villagers confirmed the earlier findings of the, *The Future in Our Hands* research, which described employment with Green Resources as failing to secure sufficient or stable income to provide food security at all times of the year.<sup>77</sup>

While annual monitoring reports Green Resources has improved in terms of its community engagement and participation,<sup>78</sup> this research demonstrates it is still a far cry in terms of delivering outcomes that resonate with local villagers' needs and aspirations.

In terms of its consultative approach, in 2013 Green Resources initiated consultative mechanisms to work with communities to establish and register community-based organizations (CBOs). The purpose is to work through these organizations, thereby connecting more directly with local communities. Yet concerns remain about such approaches. Some villagers believe that some CBOs may not be formally recognized by Green Resources, and therefore not consulted. Others lamented that their inclusion in consultative processes did not actually shape the company's approach or agenda with regard to loss of land and food security, with one participant describing, "We attend meetings, but our requests fall on deaf ears."<sup>79</sup> While the establishment of the consultation mechanism

may appear as a response to compliance requirements and “managing” communities, their deliverable outcomes fall well short of local community needs and aspirations, with many affected villagers describing constrained access to land and resources as actually worsening their circumstances. It would appear that many people are at the point of no faith in the company’s community development practices, including both its projects and consultative mechanisms.

Not surprisingly, there is growing animosity towards the company. During interviews, many people expressed frustration and despair, particularly in relation to the

*We attend meetings, but our requests fall on deaf ears.*

company’s insensitivity to their livelihood needs. On the basis of growing antagonism, some villagers foresee a potentially explosive future including the likelihood that some community members may “take matters into their own hands.”<sup>80</sup> One villager emoted, “We would rather die in jail fighting for land, than die of hunger.”<sup>81</sup>

### **BOX 2: MONEY DOES GROW ON TREES: EXPANDING CARBON MARKETS**

The green economy and carbon markets are attracting significant investment, including amongst those some would consider strange bedfellows. Global investment in carbon markets is backed by strong claims that it will deliver substantive economic returns, with Chicago trader Richard Sandor describing carbon as set to become the largest commodity in the world.<sup>82</sup> Actors with a financial stake have been part of developing and championing the green economy framework through the United Nations. Interests from the fossil fuels, agri-business, agrofuels, transport, steel, mining, oil, and the finance sectors and industries were among the corporate sponsors and lobbyists at the 2013 United National Framework Convention on Climate Change’s (UNFCCC) Conference of the Parties (COP19) held in Poland. Green economy entrepreneurs with a strong lobby presence at the conference were also members of the International Emissions Trading Association (IETA), with a membership that includes British Petroleum (BP), global finance trader Goldman Sachs, and carbon trading companies (including EDF Trading and Vattenfall Energy Trading).<sup>83</sup> The Carbon Markets and Investors Association (CMIA),<sup>84</sup> whose membership includes international banks and venture capitalists, also has privileged access to climate policy makers.

There are other consortiums of interests that also appear to have privileged access to decision makers in United Nations’ climate negotiations. The International Petroleum Industry Environmental Conservation Association (with members including BP, Chevron, ExxonMobil, Shell, and Total) has a formal channel to the UNFCCC. Meanwhile, the World Business Council for Sustainable Development—comprising of CEOs from multinational corporations, including many with poor records related to human rights, such as Shell, Dow Chemical, Monsanto, and Rio Tinto—lobbies for business interests to be represented in international climate negotiations.<sup>85</sup>

There is other evidence of public-private partnerships and collaborations, as well as “revolving doors”—a term used to describe the nefarious shuffling of personnel for power and profit—between the United Nations and carbon commodity traders. As example, after he championed the development of the carbon trading system as Head of Greenhouse Gas Emissions Trading at the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), Frank Joshua moved on to become the well paid global director of Greenhouse Gas Emissions Trading Services at the now collapsed global accounting firm Arthur Andersen. From there he moved to NatSource, a large US-based carbon commodity trader. It is the outcome of such cross sectoral lines of influence—where individuals are able to shape the contours of carbon markets, including regulations and market mechanisms, and then profit from such arrangements—that is one of the drivers of climate market development.<sup>86</sup>



## Conclusion

Despite Green Resources' broad claims that its activities address and even mitigate climate change while simultaneously delivering positive social and environmental outcomes at the local level, the activities of this company can be interpreted as being marred by social disruption, adverse livelihood impacts, and environmental problems. The violent take over of land has clearly adversely affected local food security and food sovereignty, sustainable livelihoods, and environmental sustainability. In short, the social and ecological costs of Green Resources' carbon trade projects in Uganda appear to be profound, placing villagers' already marginalized status into a dangerously precarious position.

While many hope carbon markets, including Green Resources' development projects, will be part of the solution to the problem of climate change, this report demonstrates carbon trade initiatives do not, by default, deliver positive local level development. Yet these are the very claims on which Green Resources trades; boasting that their activities deliver on climate change mitigation, producing quality wood products, and providing community development and poverty alleviation in Uganda.

This case reveals that pricing carbon imposes new forms of livelihood constraint and abuse, including out-sourcing environmental responsibility for addressing climate change to the Global South. Carbon market monitoring and regulations, including via the Forest Stewardship Council, Clean Development Mechanism, and Climate Community and Biodiversity Standard and other governance arrangements, appear ill-equipped to detect, or respond so as to remedy, these adverse impacts.

The findings of this report call for action on four counts:

1. *Investigation regarding third party certification, monitoring and compliance*

The Forest Stewardship Council, Clean Development Mechanism, and the Climate Community and Biodiversity Alliance have each certified the activities of Green Resources. The company also claims compliance with the guidelines of the International Labor Organization (ILO), the United Nations Convention on Biodiversity, the International Finance Corporation's Policy on Social and Environmental Sustainability, the OECDs guidelines for multinational corporations, the World Bank's policy on involuntary resettlement, the African Development Bank Group Involuntary Resettlement Policy, the European Investment Bank's

Environmental and Social Principles and Standards, and the European Development Finance Institutions' (EDFI), and the IFC's guidelines on business practices.<sup>87</sup>

We urge these agencies and bodies to investigate the impacts of Green Resources on local populations and the environment. Any investigation should specifically assess access to food, land, and water as well as employment protocols and working conditions.

2. *Investor accountability*

Investors in Green Resources are called upon to hold the company to account by:

a) ensuring that affected communities are given a genuine voice and authority in determining their own future and livelihoods;

b) ensuring that no further forced evictions occur and that those evicted and/or directly affected by the company's activities are offered the opportunity to resettle and re-establish their access to land, food, shelter and water, or are adequately compensated to support relocation and the establishment of new livelihoods;

c) setting up monitoring arrangements to ensure the ongoing protection of local communities.

3. *Reform of global plantation forestry and carbon markets*

This should include a critical evaluation of the effectiveness of carbon market audit mechanisms to evaluate the environmental and social claims on which companies such as Green Resources trade. It should also include widening the scope of audit mechanisms beyond the current primary concern with calculative practice (including carbon sequestration and carbon leakage) to consider the profound livelihood impacts for communities as forestry plantations expand and landscapes on which livelihoods depend, shrink. Reforms should also consider ways of establishing mechanisms to recognize common property rights, as well as access and use rights of local people in plantation forestry license areas, as well as valuing Indigenous and local people's traditional knowledge of forests and ecosystem management.

4. *On-going global actions to establish sustainable energy futures, including rapid expansion in renewable energy options, thereby reducing global greenhouse gas emissions and the subsequent reliance on offset initiatives.*



## APPENDIX

### Research Methods

The evidence presented in this report draws from primary data collection undertaken at the company's two license areas in Uganda—Bukaleba and Kachung Central Forest Reserves—during two field visits, and split over a year. The first phase of fieldwork involved interviews and focus group discussions held between June and July 2012, in nine villages (three inside the company license area, and six adjacent) affected by Green Resources (Lyons), with a second phase occurring between July and September 2013 (Lyons and Westoby). In total, the evidence presented is based on discussions with over 150 community members living alongside the plantation forestry sites. Some villages were visited twice, and sometimes three times.

These discussions generated individual and collective recollections of events related to the arrival and conduct of Green Resources. Given little prior investigation into displacement in this region, we were not able to triangulate these accounts with other evidence (e.g. no eviction registries exist). Villagers live a subsistence lifestyle with little access to education, and have had little or no opportunity to document or record keep, and little understanding of why this might be important—hence people often gave approximate rather than specific accounts.

The selection of villages was based on information provided by company staff, local NGOs, and elected local representatives. These 'gatekeepers' provided introductions to villagers located inside and adjacent to the project sites, and on the basis of these introductions, a snowball sampling technique was adopted, as well as random sampling amongst villages visited. This purposive sampling provided an approach to hear from a diversity of people, and to gain information about the range of experiences associated with the arrival of the company. Interviews were continued until research saturation was reached, that is, until no new themes were raised, but rather existing themes were repeated, albeit in different ways.

Given the risks for participants in this research, including fears of recriminations for speaking with researchers, the presentation of findings is undertaken to ensure the anonymity of participants. As such, we do not refer to the village that participants reside in, or other aspects that might reveal participants' identities.

Primary data collection also involved interviews with six Green Resources company staff, including repeated interviews with the in-country Executive Director and community development and plantation management staff. The CEO, Mads Aspren, declined the opportunity to be interviewed.

In addition, interviews were conducted with 16 representatives from government, environmental non-government organizations, a number of journalists writing on the topic and local community health officers.

Research involved using interpreters, recording and transcribing of interviews and rigorous analysis of data. The research project attained ethics approval via The University of Queensland, Australia.

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