

## **ECCDPG MESSAGE FOR THE LDPG WEBSITE**

This COVID-19 pandemic and associated restrictions have exacerbated the challenges posed by the heavy rains from February – March 2020 resulting in thousands displaced; deaths; destruction of homes, property, productive assets, field crops and other physical infrastructure such roads. This presents serious bottlenecks to relief and humanitarian efforts in those areas especially for the vulnerable populations. There is need for collaboration between government, development and humanitarian partners to support and enhance environmental conservation, and restoration initiatives including sustainable forest management in Uganda as well as ensure that the gains from commercial afforestation are not lost. These initiatives include mainstreaming climate change in other sectors (agriculture, energy, industry, transport); protection, rehabilitation and restoration of forests and other fragile ecosystems; revision of Uganda's NDC (2030); drafting Uganda's Long-term Strategy on Climate Change 2050 as well as Social Protection Initiatives to support the more vulnerable populations.

For the tourism sector as there are no more tourists travelling to the country, hotels are closed, and many government staff have stopped working while a few work virtually. Nature based tourism generates many jobs and significant revenues (USD 1.6 billion in 2018) which benefit local communities.

Management of the Environment and Natural Resources faces a bigger risk since there is reduced surveillance / enforcement efforts which then presents opportunity for abuse and misuse of resources including wildlife and protected areas, encroachment, land grabbing and unapproved infrastructural developments.

The nascent commercial (plantation) forestry industry in Uganda, that can reduce some of the pressure off illegal logging if supported holistically as a sector, is also somewhat affected. Export of timber has been more intermittent, and as more drivers test positive for COVID-19, the number of trucks transporting timber may decrease resulting in further loss of business. While job losses have not been reported, a potential lowering of demand, logistical slow-downs and an increasing cost of conducting business safely may also dis-incentivize growers from planting another tree crop and may revert to agriculture instead, reversing the gains made in afforestation in the last years.

On a more positive note, studies confirm an improvement in air quality in the capital city Kampala, with an improvement of up to 40% during the COVID-19 lockdown period (Makerere University & Airqo, 2020). Details of the study available here: <https://www.airqo.net/blog>