

# Confronting Twenty-first Century Challenges

*Analyses and Re-dedication  
by National and International Scholars*

Volume Two

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OPEC	- The Organisation of petroleum Exporting Countries
OSSREA	- Organisation for Social Science Research in Eastern Africa
PAC	- Public Accounts Committee
PAP	- Poverty Alleviation Programme
PEAP	- Poverty Eradication Action Plan
PTA	- Preferential Trade Area
SADC	- The Southern African Development Cooperation
SADCC	- Southern Africa Development Co-operation Council
SAPs	- Structural Adjustment Programmes
SAREC	- Swedish Agency for Research Cooperation with Developing
SEs	- Small Enterprises
SIDA	- Swedish International Development Agency
SPLA/M	- Sudanese People Liberation Army/Movement
SSA	- Sub-Sahara Africa
TNCs	- Transnational Corporations
TOC	- Transnational Organised Crime
UDHR	- Universal Declaration of Human Rights
UNEP	- United Nations Environment programme
UNICEF	- United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund
UPE	- Universal Primary Education
UPPAP	- Uganda Poverty Participatory Assessment Project
USSR	- Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
WCED	- World Commission on Environment and Development Women
WTO	- The World Trade Organisation

## Acronyms

AIDS	- Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
ATRs	- African Traditional Religions
BNA	- Basic Needs Approach
CEDAW	- The Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against
CJS	- Criminal Justice System
CODESRIA	- Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa
COMESA	- Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa Countries
DRC	- The Democratic Republic of Congo
EAC	- East African Community
EADB	- The East African Development Bank
ECOWAS	- Economic Community for West African States
ERMs	- Emergent Religious Movements
ERP	- Economic Recovery programme
ESAMI	- The East and Southern Africa management Institute
FAO	- Food and Agricultural Organisation
FSP	- The Family Support Programme
FSS	- Faculty of Social Sciences
GDP	- Gross Domestic Product
GIR	- Gross International Reserves
GNP	- Gross National Product
HDI	- Human Development Index
HIAC	- Highly-indebted African Countries
HIV	- Human Immuno-Deficiency Virus
IBEAC	- The Imperial British East African Company
IDA	- International Development Agency
IDPs	- Internally Displaced Persons
IDRC	- International Development Research Centre
IFRA	- The French International Research Cooperation in Africa
IGAD	- Inter-Governmental Authority on Development
IGADD	- Inter-Governmental Authority on Drought and Desertification
IGAs	- Income Generating Activities
IGG	- Inspector-General of Government
IMF	- International Monetary Fund
INCB	- International Narcotics Control Board
INTERPOL	- International Police
IPR	- Intellectual Property Rights
IRCS	- Informal Rural Credit Schemes
LDCs	- Less Developed Countries
LRA	- Lord's Resistance Army
NIE	- New Intellectual Endeavour
NIEO	- New International Economic Order
NRM	- National Resistance Movement
NURP	- Northern Uganda Reconstruction Programme
NURRU	- Network of Ugandan Researchers and Research Users

## THIRTY-ONE

# The Current Status of the Agrarian Crisis in Kigezi, South Western Uganda

Murindwa-Rutanga

### Introduction

Kigezi region is in south-western Uganda. It is faced with a raging agrarian crisis. This chapter examines the character and characteristics of this crisis, the land question, land ownership; brings out the socio-political, administrative, economic and legal processes of land accumulation, and the instrumental role of the state in the acquisition of agrarian property. Such state interventions include land reforms, land reclamation and distribution to individuals, economic war, loans, and deliberate creation of the landowning class. The chapter analyses the different sections of society that benefited, the new forms of property accumulation and the sources of income and capital to purchase agrarian property, the new forms of capital accumulation and development, and the new dynamics of land ownership, their effect on the population, and the new options available to the agrarian poor. It examines the rise and effects of *magendo*, the explanations for the increasing alcoholism and its impact on the agrarian question, on household politics and economies, etc, and the different options open to the agrarian poor for survival. The consequences of expropriation and privatisation of the communal resources, the struggle between the hoe and the cow – that is, crop husbandry versus animal husbandry, and the increasing commoditisation of land and other agrarian property, etc, are also examined.

It further looks at the crisis of lack of tools of production such as the hoe and machetes, and the option open to the peasants; the agrarian problem of crop destruction and the peasants' methods of struggle – within the social and legal domains. It then examines the weaknesses of the imposed analyses of this crisis, peasants' views on these solutions, analyses the property ownership and nutritional status in the agrarian setting, the livestock and poultry ownership in the area of study, the current labour situation in Kigezi, and the different forms of labour processes in the agrarian setting. It also examines the new forms of de-agrarianisation through loans, the role of laws/courts, banks and the state in this phenomenon.

The agrarian crisis in Kigezi was first detected by the colonial authorities in Kigezi in the 1920s. This detection initially focused on issues like soil erosion, increasing population versus the diminishing land and faulty agricultural practices. This was expanded in the late 1930s by



the Colonial Office to, *inter alia*, include overstocking and lack of land for cash cropping.

Subsequent analyses have over time brought out its varying characteristics. Topical among these are the increasing landlessness, poverty, food insecurity, environmental and demographic crises, social and gender inequalities, rampant conflictual politics at household level, increasing alcoholism and its negative consequences on health, household economies and politics, etc. What is of interest to the study is a recent study by Kim Lindblade *et al* (1996). This work raises a divergent intellectual position. It questions the whole notion of the agrarian crisis in the area and dismisses these epistemic claims as mere colonial intentions, apocalyptic predictions of doom that have refused to come true for the past half century.<sup>1</sup> Using Purseglove's methodology of 1943-44 and carrying out research in the same areas as he did, the study found that there was no acute environmental degradation through soil erosion in Kigezi, no falling crop yields and loss of tree cover, no famines or food insecurity. It posited that despite the increasing population pressure, the inhabitants consciously avoided degrading the environment. It argued that despite population growth, which had continuously put pressure on people in the region, the inhabitants made sure that they did not degrade the environment.<sup>2</sup> The poorest households were purchasing most of their food, through an increased casualisation of female labour and increased male migration into wage labour.<sup>3</sup> It found that no famines or serious food shortages had occurred in Kigezi since early 1940s.

At the facial level, this was an inspiring work, showing both the absence of agrarian crisis and rationality on the part of the peasants. It did not find scientific evidence to show the crisis. There was no acute environmental degradation through soil erosion, no falling crop yields and loss of tree cover. It found all earlier epistemic claims of agrarian crisis in the area were mere apocalyptic predictions of doom that had refused to come true for half a century. It, therefore, dismissed this agrarian crisis as a mere colonial invention. This was not radically different from the postulations of Nsibambi ten years before. He had dismissed the whole notion of agrarian question in Uganda as an ideological construct by oral documentary radicals who exaggerated the plight of peasants through public lectures and newspapers.<sup>4</sup>

To understand these far-reaching findings demands an understanding of that study's methodological contours. With Rockefeller Foundation funding, the study went fifty-two years back and adopted Purseglove's 1943-44 research methods in order to grasp the current landlessness and food situation, land productivity and effects of fragmentation. The puzzling question is why this research team decided to freeze these peasants' history so as to apply Purseglove's obsolete methodology. Could Purseglove and this new study have had similar assignments and terms of reference?

It was contradictory in terms for a study that dismissed the agrarian crisis as colonial imagination to have proceeded and embraced the research methods of the colonial functionary who had been specifically sent to study a nascent agrarian crisis in Kigezi and initiate the solution of population reduction through resettlement. Its uncritical acceptance of the research methodology of a seasoned colonial technocrat who confessed to be studying untamed and conservative primitive people that were resistant and hostile to change and development raises serious questions.<sup>5</sup> The study's acquiescence and reincarnation of such an obsolete methodology without criticality and qualification was in itself a negation of the people's political, social, scientific and intellectual achievements for half a century since Purseglove's undertaking.



Another disconcerting aspect of that study was the way it dismissed all earlier studies on the agrarian crisis in Kigezi by questioning their methodologies and quantum of their experiments. That was empiricism to which Ddungu's critique of the MISR-Wisconsin study is equally applicable. In his critique, Ddungu raises three epistemological assumptions of positivism: the belief in the centrality of the scientific method, adherence to the covering law model of explanation, and the belief in observation. It holds that theoretical truth can only be established through rigorous testing of deductively-derived hypotheses.<sup>6</sup> Contrary to this approach which privileges methodology over the obtaining reality, what is required is an approach, which causally explains phenomena holistically and explores other unobservable factors that may explain reality.<sup>7</sup>

Through this method, the study found that while the population had more than doubled since 1945, the area under cultivation, in proportion to the total land surface had decreased, the area under fallow had significantly increased, land under trees had doubled and soil fertility had not declined seriously.<sup>8</sup> However, it did not investigate which classes were leaving land to fallow and which land was left to fallow. It did not seek explanations why there was increasing fallowing on one hand and increasing landlessness, mass poverty and misery on the other. Yet, in 1991, a government study on food security and export had reported that over 77 per cent of arable land in Kigezi was under use.<sup>9</sup>

The study did not carry out a synchronic analysis of the social relations at the two different historical moments - 1945 and 1996. While classes were still in their embryonic formation in 1945, and land had not acquired commodity value, 1996 was characterised by high capital accumulation processes and social differentiation, class struggles and social movements. Land has developed into a very important commodity, and has become a source of major tensions, struggles and crimes. The study ignored the impact of the RPF-Rwanda war on Kigezi, the conditions which were favouring the emergence of the *Fusarium wilt* (bean root rot) in the area, and its consequences. Neither did it put into perspective the negative consequences of swamp reclamation. It, however, ended conceding that the respondents had reported declining soil fertility due to over-cultivation. It also conceded that fallowing was more common with households with most land and resources to hire labour to increase inter-cropping.<sup>10</sup> Contrary to its dismissal of resettlement scheme as a total failure,<sup>11</sup> both the facts on the ground and our respondents acclaimed it as the main solution to the agrarian crisis.<sup>12</sup>

There are circumstances which lead to land abandonment. These include land exhaustion, known as *okubamuka* or *okucuukuuka*, or land undergoing irreversible degradation known as *wamutara*. Land abandonment due to land disutility largely explains what is seemingly abundant fallow. The landowners attempt to plant trees on such lands. Secondly, land is concentrated in fewer hands through purchases, state grants, grabbing and pawning. The land-rich class owns more land than it requires for its seasonal production purposes. It is this class which is profiteering from lending or renting out land, fallowing some of it or planting trees.

Another work came out the following year with contrary revelations of acute agrarian crisis. It reported widespread severe malnutrition, chronic underfeeding, famines, food shortages, child diseases, and shortage of agricultural labour, gender imbalances, low literacy, widespread poverty, environmental degradation, civil strife and war. It attributed food problems to high population pressure and fragmented unproductive minuscule land. It showed that 75 per cent of the households owned less than two acres of land and cultivated all of it continuously



without rest.<sup>13</sup> This crisis had been present for years. In 1988/89, the stunting rate in Kabale District was 63 per cent, which was the highest in Uganda. This reduced to 61.3 per cent in 1994. The situation was not far different in Rukungiri District where the stunting rate was 60 per cent.<sup>14</sup> The situation improved by 1996 to 47 per cent. It reported underweight of 16.5 per cent and wasting of children; high rates of goitre due to iodine deficiency disorders; and presence of cretins due to thyroid deficiency. A study on Vitamin A in Kabale District in 1992 had unearthed prevalence of xerophthalmia of 6.4 per cent.<sup>15</sup>

Contrary to reality, this work by Kakitahi *et al* attributed the destruction of swamps to high population pressure. While the politics underlying the colonial government's swamp reclamation began under the guise of fighting off famines, it had ended up creating a propertied class or "progressive farmers." What is worth noting here is that this phenomenon triggered off a complex process of grabbing, privatising and reclaiming communal swamps. This process gave rise to widespread militant peasant resistance, sometimes with the active support and participation of chiefs and councillors hailing from the area. The study by Kakitahi *et al* did not make efforts to investigate the activities being carried out on these swamplands. Neither did it put into perspective the forms and consequences of land sales on the vast majority of peasants and the traditional livestock husbandry.

Despite the shortcomings and omissions in many of these works, they still demonstrate that the agrarian crisis besetting Kigezi has been growing in depth, breadth and virulence. It is affecting the greatest proportion of the peasant population. This raises series of questions about its historical origins, developments, dimensions and dynamics. How is it affecting the different sections of society and what is their response to it? What has been the effect of the policies and legislations on it? What form of politics does it give rise to? What forces continue to reproduce it? What explains its resilience despite the different solutions? In what ways do the solutions meant to address it exacerbate it and influence the rise of peasant movements? Through what ways do the peasants respond to these developments? What have been their forms of struggle and their consequences?

What has come out clearly is that there has been lack of interest by researchers to analyse the agrarian crisis in Kigezi holistically, draw conclusions and formulate solutions for resolving it. There is also a marked absence of researches on the peasants' varied solutions, struggles and movements; the forms of politics which the agrarian crisis has been giving rise to, how it influences these peasants' outlook and participation in politics. This paper, therefore, focuses on some of the aspects of the current status of the agrarian crisis in Kigezi.

## The Land Question in Kigezi

Land (*eitaka*) constitutes the basis for human existence. Land is central to agriculturists, pastoralists, hunters and gatherers. All these can only reproduce themselves on land. In conditions of settled agriculture, therefore ownership of land is very crucial for peasant production and existence. Land constitutes their occupation and working place, source of livelihood and incomes. Land has increasingly become collateral for loans and capital stock. Ownership of land and other agrarian property reinforces cohesion within households as it ensures them security against hunger. The children feel secure since there is property for them to share when they grow up. The same land constitutes security for the parents against starvation in old age. As such, accessibility, ownership and utilisation of land are very crucial



for the peasants. All these make land so primal in the peasant mode of production that any agrarian study has to examine it in detail. As such, we begin by analysing the land question in Kigezi.

There are certain issues that need to be noted first. One, land in Kigezi is measured in strips. This excepts a few surveyed lands in Rukungiri and others that are owned by the agrarian capitalists, business people, rich peasants and the bureaucratic bourgeoisie. An average strip of land was originally estimated to be about two-fifth of an acre. "Strip of land" is the general method of land measurement. Land in Kigezi is referred to in terms of strips. The concept "strip" traces from anti-erosion conservation measures by colonialists. That was when land was divided into strips. Since then, the concept of strip locally known as *emikiika* or *pulani* became an established unit of measuring land. This has been maintained hitherto. The courts of law and other bodies apply the same measurement. This concept gives a clearer understanding of the quantum of land under discussion. This concept has been maintained because of two reasons. Most of the land in Kigezi is not surveyed and registered. It is held under customary tenure system. There are no official records regarding the quantum of land being held by different parties. There have been increasing divisions and subdivisions of land in Kigezi. This occurs when parents are giving out land as marriage gifts to their children locally known as *okuteekyesa amabega*. This is a marriage gift to a newly married couple by the parents of the husband. Other instances include cases such as when a polygamous husband divides land between his wives, or when parents are dividing land between their children, or during inheritance after the demise of the parents. Another increasing practice is of the heads of the households to slice off small pieces of land and sell them at very high prices. This piecemeal land selling is the new form of sales characterising the land market in Kigezi today. Two, our respondent households had an average of seven people. Forty-six per cent of the respondent households were above the average. Thirty-one of them had eight members each, twenty-six households had nine members each while twenty-one households had ten members each. Twenty-six households had more than ten people each. On the other hand, three households had one member each. These were old widows, owning plenty of land.

Three, the process of land acquisition and ownership has been undergoing changes since colonialism. Originally, land would be acquired by clearing bushes, forests and swamps.<sup>16</sup> Then, the offspring and dependants would inherit family land. With the growing intensification of colonial exploitation and the rise of the agrarian crisis in Kigezi, plus other colonial activities that deprived the peasants of opportunity to access and utilise communal resources, land began to acquire commodity value. Land sales came in as it became scarce. These activities and state demands also exerted pressures on the available land. With time, the poor and those who were hard-pressed economically or politically began to sell their land. It began as wholesale of strips but gradually reduced to piecemeal land sales. These compulsions included payment of debts, taxes, fines or social obligations such as dowries and marriage or those migrating.

Table 1: Land Ownership At Household Level (Land in Strips)

Amount of land in strips	0	1-2	3-4	5-6	7-10	11-20	Above 20	Total	Percentage
HHs with 1-5 people	5	28	20	8	12	2	4	79	32
HHs with > 5 people	11	37	35	26	16	27	15	167	68
Total	16	65	55	34	28	29	19	246	100
Percentage	7	26	22	14	11	12	8	100	

Source: Field Research

Table 2: Peasant Households Without Land In The Surveyed Areas

HHs With No Land in Researched Area	1-5	6-10	11-20	Above 20
Number of Respondents (Percentage)	17	20	9	40

Source: Field Research

Tables 1 and 2 above show the land ownership in the surveyed area. Table 1 shows land ownership of the respondent households. Table 2 shows the number of households in the surveyed area that did not have land. From Table 1, seven per cent of the respondent households did not own any land. They lacked land on which to reproduce themselves. Twenty-six per cent of the respondent households owned one to two strips of land. The third row brings out how most of these respondent households were constituted by more than five people. This resulted into cultivating whatever available land every season. This caused land exhaustion and loss of fertility. Land gradually began to undergo irreversible degradation. This was worsened by the fact that the peasants do not apply manure, compost and fertilisers in their agriculture.

From this table, fifty-five per cent of the respondent households lack land on which to reproduce themselves. This equally applies to many households of the fourteen per cent respondent households, who own five to six strips of land. Only twenty per cent of the respondent households owned more than eleven strips of land. Eight per cent of the respondent households owned more than twenty strips of land. If we look at some of these households with a lot of land, the household that owned the highest amount of land had 175 strips. The household with the second largest amount of land owned 125 strips of land, while the third one owned seventy strips of land. Six households owned more than fifty strips of land apiece. It is this eight per cent that is able to reproduce itself on land. These are rich peasants. They have transformed some of this land into enclosed farms for cattle rearing. They use some of it for commercial agriculture, rent or lend out some land. Some have expansive plantations of bananas, coffee and trees on other land. It is this class that is purchasing more land, investing in other sectors like trade, motorised and *boda boda* (bicycle) transport, and good education for their children.

There are three distinct processes through which the large landowning classes have been



acquiring land since the mid-1950s. These are political, illegal and economic. The political means included benefiting from land grants by the state through the Land Commission; or by getting resources through political and state connections to purchase land. Others took advantage of the state's policy of expropriating people's land and they grabbed communal lands for personal use and ownership. Many of them did it under the aegis of Idi Amin's Land Reform Decree of 1975. The state-sponsored expropriation of communal resources triggered off land grabbing process of communal resources by the emerging propertied class, the "progressive farmers". This unleashed a chain reaction of land trespass over other people's land. This was through intimidation, threats and violence. The study unearthed numerous land struggles over trespass.<sup>17</sup> This primitive accumulation through expropriation by the state to its supporters and functionaries and/or individuals locally known as *okuhamba enfunjo* has subsided. This is because there are no more resources to expropriate. This process has been replaced by market mechanisms. The beneficiaries of government land grants are the ones dominating the current land market. This is the same class that benefited and prospered from the expropriated properties of the Asians. It is this class which owns resources to purchase land. Some of the peasants are lured and coerced into selling their land. The moneylenders sometimes sell the collateral and pawned property to recover their loans.

Table 2 shows the problem of lack of land in the surveyed area. From this table, seventeen per cent of the respondents came from areas that had one to five households that did not own any land. Twenty per cent of the respondents came from areas that had between six to ten households that did not own land. Nine per cent of the respondents came from areas with eleven to twenty households that had no land. Forty per cent of the respondents came from areas with over twenty households that had no land. These figures show that many households lack land to produce crops for food and sale; and which land would be bequeathed to their progenies. The figures in the two tables present a dismal situation where most peasant households cannot reproduce themselves on land.

The survey found that chiefs were among those who owned large tracts of land. This is confirmed by the quantum of land that is owned by the two chiefs among our respondents. One owned twenty strips of land while another one owned eighteen strips of land. The survey also found that education led to high-income earning jobs. These incomes were then used to purchase land in the agrarian setting. Others who were involved in purchasing land included the *mafutamingi*, the large landowners and the capitalist dairy farmers, traders, the politicians and people who are earning high incomes. These have money or are able to get money from their work places or procure loans from banks to purchase land. Those engaged in land selling include those in distress or faced with problems, those migrating, or those seeking money to undertake other ventures. It is this group that has been accumulating land through purchases. Among these were those people working in the judiciary, a former head of National Intelligence Services, a Chairman of Land Committee, timber traders, LC members, teachers, Christian priests, a hotel manager, policemen, a builder, government functionaries and business people. Land matters also constituted a lucrative source of income for the officials who dealt with them. These included the magistrates, lawyers and government officials like the surveyors. They generated large sums of money as court fees and got allowances and/or other extra-legal earnings.

The owners of large tracts of land utilise it for commercial purposes. Some of them have



established large banana plantations for commercial purposes. They grow *enyamwonyo*<sup>18</sup> varieties to sell as food and *embihire*<sup>19</sup> varieties for alcohol brewing. The survey learnt that the owners of large banana plantations in Rukungiri District brewed on average sixty jerry cans of *tonto* or *rwagwa* (banana brew) per brewing.<sup>20</sup> Others sold *embihire* to brewers. Members of this class also established *shambas* of eucalyptus trees for commercial purposes. Others rented out land (*okupangisa*) or lent it out (*okwatira*). The question to examine is how the peasants without land have been coping.

Faced with lack of any wherewithal, the peasants seek solutions from within their society. They hire or borrow land for crop production. The rent ranged between Shs. 10,000/= to Shs. 20,000/= per strip of land. The process of *okwatisa* (land borrowing) – *okwatira* (lending out land) is not free. It involves payment in various forms such as labour, crops, money and booze. Secondly, lending out land is a means of accessing free labour for opening up land. The land may be infested with couch grass, swamp, trees, bush and/or stones.

There are many problems with *okupangisa* (hiring land) and *okwatisa* (borrowing land). The first one relates to high rent, which cannot be recovered from the harvests. The practice is for the owners of land to rent out land that is poor, unproductive and exhausted or that which is infested with couch grass, thorns and stones. Another problem is that the land may be located in areas that are prone to crop destruction by animals, thefts, erosion or natural hazards. All these make it hard for those who hire land to recover their money paid for rent and other inputs in form of labour, seeds and tools used in the whole production process. It becomes hard for them to get money for renting land in the next season. The main snag is that whoever wants to hire land has to pay rent before land use. Cases were reported where landowners rented out the same strip of land to two parties. These make *okupangisa* a risky and painful undertaking. The respondents informed the study that the landowners were continuously increasing rent. They pointed out that there was no agrarian authority to intervene on their behalf and regulate land rent. They underlined the urgency of state intervention to control rent. Two respondents went a step further to propose that government should confiscate this land and distribute it among the poor peasants.

One household among our respondents had abandoned land hiring and opted to buy food during harvest time. The couple informed the study that they had found this option cheaper, more convenient and reliable than *okupangisa*. It needs to be pointed out here that this option was possible for this couple because they had permanent government jobs, with monthly incomes. The husband was a headmaster of a grade one school. This option is, however, closed to the peasants who lack agrarian property and have no sources of income. The question is how the peasants explain their problem of lack of land.

The respondents gave different explanations for their lack of land in the agrarian setting. These can be classified as historical, structural, demographic and socio-economic. In some areas, certain people came to some areas in search of work. They gradually settled, married and integrated among the local communities. But they did not have land. Others came to settle there but could not get land. There were others who did not inherit land from their parents. In some cases, the children found that their parents had distributed the land to their elder sons or that they had sold it. Worse still, both the parents and the children lacked money to buy land. One respondent explained in a candid manner the permanence of lack of land in her household thus: *Abataine eitaka ukanyire, nanye mbarimu. Nkabika omuka naashanga*



*ibanyi aine ekibira kimwe, kubisya nabatiya. Naabika naazaara abaana mukaaga naabura esente z'okugura ebibira.* (There are many people without land, including me. When I got married, I found my husband having only one piece of land. I gave birth to six children but lacked money to buy land. As such, we still own only that piece of land.)<sup>21</sup>

Her explanation brings out the problem of people without agrarian property getting married and then producing many children without improving the household's material conditions. It is impossible to maintain the eight people in her household on the proceeds from that one piece of land. This piece of land is likely to have been under cultivation non-stop since her marriage. Yet, there is no application of manure, compost or fertilisers to rejuvenate the land. Polygamy and producing many children vis-à-vis minuscule land has been resulting in division and sub-division of land amongst the various wives and their offspring. This has had adverse consequences on the agrarian crisis. Other people without land included children without parents, the children born out of prostitution, the Abatwa and their offspring. Three rich peasants attributed this problem to laziness and averseness to work of the poor peasants. This explanation is flawed with prejudices. First, the propertied class employs these same people in its commercial activities. It is inconceivable how they could continue to waste their resources employing lazy people. Secondly, it is this class and its politico-economic activities that brought into formation the poor peasant class. These activities included land expropriation, land take-overs and purchases.

Another development that started in the 1960s and which waned in the 1970s was for parents to sell agrarian property and get money to educate their children, mainly the sons. This was in the hope that the sons would acquire good formal education at Makerere University, get good jobs and rescue their families from their squalor and lack of land. This futuristic investment proved counterproductive as the sons would get jobs and forget their parents. Various factors led to this reversal. First, many of those sons never fulfilled their families' expectations. They got good jobs and concentrated on their individual careers. Secondly, it did not follow that selling land to pay for the children was a guarantee to their academic success in order to get good jobs. Some of them failed to make it academically. The final blow emerged from the negative consequences of Amin's Economic War of 1972. Much of the expropriated property was given to those who had never gone to school at all. These beneficiaries and other daring individuals exploited the economic and political crisis through hoarding and then charging high prices and also through *magendo* - smuggling goods across the border. This, however, had negative consequences on education and the new ultra-hostile attitude towards education. The emergence of a predominantly illiterate and semi-illiterate bourgeois class (*mafutamingi*) created an irreconcilable relationship between the educated people and the *mafutamingi*. The *mafutamingi* suffered from inferiority complex. This surprising rise to economic power had undermined education, which till then had been held in high esteem by the whole society. It was now clear that one did not need education to be rich. After all, Amin was Life President although he had never gone to school. These *mafutamingi* and their wealth spread a culture that publicly despised education. This was to compensate for their inferiority complex. The *mafutamingi* were ultra-hostile to the educated and those who were in school. The derogatory term that this class coined to refer to the educated was *ba akicuware* (the actualities). 'Actually' was the only word that they had managed to identify whenever the educated people were talking, whether in English or in the local language. The *mafutamingi* became the economic élites in the whole country.



They were the richest class in the country, controlling the local trade and *magendo*. This culture and affluence lured children to run away from school since they saw no value in education while they could make it through *magendo*. Some teachers also abandoned teaching and went to do *magendo* as their salaries had been eroded by inflation. Education in Kigezi collapsed. This put a check to land sales for the children's education. The peasants instead began to sell land to meet other pressing needs.

Then, there are certain peasants who sell their land hoping to buy other land or to migrate to other areas or to invest in trade. They, however, fail to accomplish their plans. Meanwhile, the value of the money becomes increasingly eroded by inflation. At the same time, they are also forced to use part of the money for other purposes. Then, there is land that is sold to recover debts, pay taxes, fines or to buy alcohol and *muchomo* (roast pork/meat). Others spend the proceeds from land sales on luxurious life in towns and urban centres. This may include renting houses, drinking bottled beer and indulging in promiscuity. The increasing alcoholism in Kigezi demonstrates the negative developments of neo-colonialism. *Ebaara* (bars) are not places for refreshment after hard work but they are environments of full-time loitering, parasitism, cheap talk, conspiracies, cheating, stealing, quarrels, brawls, fights and promiscuity. These victims of alcoholism spend whatever money they get on alcohol. This increases the destitution of the individuals and their households.

The question is how the peasants address the problems of lack of food. The peasants' main solutions include borrowing and/or hiring land for crop production on a seasonal basis. In situations of acute food shortages, some people go to other places in search of food. This is locally known as *okushaka*. Motorised transportation and bicycles have increasingly improved this. In the past, people used to walk for days and brave different risks looking for food. Others work for food (*kucwa encuro*) or for wages to buy food. Others make crafts for sale. It needs to be noted that they are the women who normally work for food. In Kigezi, it is considered socially and politically demeaning for men to work for food. Working for food is considered to undermine patriarchal hegemony and the political status of men in their families and society. Some of those people that do not have any wherewithal depend on the mercy of the other people in the area. Some of them solve their immediate food needs by visiting other people's homes at meal times so as to share their meals with them. Some of them sleep wherever night finds them. Many of them wear whatever clothes that other people discard to them. Those who do not own houses sleep in houses whose owners are away. Then, there are others who have annexed themselves to the relatives' homes. This is locally known as *kushembera*. Another general observation is that the agrarian crisis and the resultant poverty force people into social malpractice such as habitual lying, stealing, cheating, debt contraction and defaulting, enmity, murders and prostitution.

Households are sometimes forced to sell their possessions in situations of serious food shortage. Those who fail to get such solutions go hungry. Some people depend on green vegetables and some even cook wild plants. These emergency solutions reflect the acuteness of the agrarian crisis. They also show how commodity relations have not fully supplanted other social relations. The increasing destitution, lack of land or any other means of livelihood have resulted in different consequences. These include land trespass and land take-overs, varied intensive land struggles including violence. This is well demonstrated by the 350 court cases that the study analysed in the Kigezi Chief Magistrate's Court, Kabale. Ninety four per cent of them were on land and the developments on it. Some of these cases involved



criminal violence, including brutal murders. One example is Case MKA 36/83 between Rwantare versus Rwabutoga. In this case, Rwabutoga was brutally murdered by a mob from one lineage over agrarian property. These cases did not include cases on crop destruction, which constituted three per cent of the cases.

The study found that virtually all the respondent households sold food. It is important to understand the politics of food and food sales at household level. Faced with the continuous poor crop harvests, plus the drudgery suffered by women and children in households, any crop sales have to be agreed upon or conflicts arise over any crop sales at household level. This was also the case in many of the thirty-two per cent of respondent households in which men controlled the food. In other households, food was controlled by women or by both spouses or there was no direct food controller due to meagre harvests. It was in a few households where men would determine what food to sell and how to use the proceeds. The members of such households would have no way of resisting it. One respondent aptly put it that *n'okufa mamigye* (continuing to suffer the pain without complaining). This study, however, found that such food sales were a basis for conflictual politics within households. This usually arises whenever a member of the household sells food crops without the knowledge and consent of the other members of the household. The issue may be resolved through mediation by family friends or through intervention by authorities and the courts. The main cause of this micro conflictual politics is poverty, plus the men's refusal to participate in the household production processes.

Another important finding was that perennial crops were monopolised and utilised by men as men's crops. These included bananas, coffee and tea. These were money-generating crops that did not require a lot of labour. The survey further found that virtually every household engaged in food sales. Even those who produced little would still sell part of it for money. This commoditisation of food reflected the intensity of capital penetration in this agrarian setting. Different factors dictated these food sales. These included getting money to purchase household necessities such as other types of food, hiring or buying agricultural instruments like land, labour, hoes, machetes and seeds. Others needed money to build houses, educate their children, invest in trade, fulfil their contribution to the *ehibiina* and repay debts and/or meet other political, social and religious obligations. Some crop sales were also determined by the nature of the crop. Commodity crops like coffee, tea, tobacco, pyrethrum and vegetables are produced exclusively for commercial purposes. Perishable crops like vegetables and bananas demand prompt selling due to lack of facilities for their processing, storing and preservation. The problem with selling food during harvest time is that that is the time when most peasants rush to the market to sell their crops. This floods the market with food crops and results in price falls. Even some of it may fail to get market due to the few traders, who may be constrained by little cash to buy the crop or by transportation problems.

The survey found a different type of politics in households of rich peasants. Their production was normally planned for commercial purposes. The whole agricultural production process was characterised by discussion and planning by the couples. They planned the food sales, the quantum for sale, the timing for sales and how to use the proceeds. It was this class which was investing some of the proceeds in agriculture, trade, transport and education for their children. Another important finding was that men who had skills, occupations and earned steady incomes had left the food domain under the full control of their wives.



Another important development related to the consequences of the expropriation and privatisation of the communal resources. This process had pushed the cultivators and cattle graziers to the marginal lands. This opened new struggles for land between the cultivators and the cattle owners. This struggle is locally known as *orugamba orw'efuka n'ente* - the war between the hoe and the cow. This resulted in overgrazing of the marginal areas by the local breeds of cows. A number of the new proprietors established farms in the swampland for the imported breeds of cattle for commercial dairy farming. Marginal peasants owning livestock grazed them on fallow and roadsides. From the study, only eleven households had enough pasturage or *amariisizo* (grazing areas). *Amariisizo*, as a concept and practice traces from the colonial days and has undergone a series of changes. It developed from *okuriisa* (to graze, feed or shepherd). Gradually, it gained wide usage and political significance as the struggles over land intensified. This unfolded in the struggle of colonialists to create the yeoman class by creating "progressive farmers". It was for this reason that the authorities pushed away both the cultivators and the livestock owners to the scanty marginal lands. This was worsened by the growing shortage of land. The graziers and the cultivators began to struggle over these marginal resources. Hence two forms of struggles were going on simultaneously within the same formation. The first one was of all the peasants struggling against the emerging land accumulators under the aegis of the state. The other one was between the local cattle owners versus the cultivators. These struggles sharpened and became bloody. What had happened was that pushing the local population from the swampland and other communal resources through legislation and force gave rise to conflicts amongst the deprived majority over the marginal land. Faced with these two forms of struggles at different levels, the state intervened in the intra-peasant struggle. It defined *amariisizo* in the peasantry, and gave them a new socio-political and legal meaning and recognition as public grazing lands. These policies favouring the commercial dairy farms were detrimental to the local breeds of cattle. They could not thrive under these conditions of deprivation for long. With the development of individualised pasturage and dairy farming, the meaning of this concept has changed to mean dairy farms.

All these demonstrate an acute land problem in Kigezi. They also show the increasing land purchases and accumulation of a small class, concurrently with the increasing number of people without land. These findings indicate the need for an urgent solution for the destitute agrarian population. Such a solution has, therefore, to include a major land reform. This is an area for further research by different disciplines and policy-makers.

### The Crisis of the Hoe (*Efuka*) in the Peasant Economy

To understand the current status of the agrarian crisis in Kigezi one needs to examine the position of the tools of production in the peasant economy. This is important as the status and quality of instruments of labour is a prime factor in any production process. The availability and quality of the tools of production depend on the availability of the tools on the market and the money to purchase them. For purposes of this study, we shall focus on the hoe (*efuka*), the main tool of production in the peasant agriculture. The availability or non-availability of this crucial tool of production has a major bearing on the agricultural activities.

In examining the status of the hoes at household level, our study found that there was a very big problem of lack of hoes in many households. This was due to various factors. It was

found that the responsibility of buying hoes and other inputs was entirely on women in 46 per cent of the households. Yet, these women did not have direct sources of income, and they spent most of their time performing household activities. Nor did they engage in direct commodity production to generate incomes. As such, many households ended up depending on borrowing and/or hiring hoes and/or using *obufuuni* (the depreciated, small hoes).

From Table 3 below, 27 per cent of the households depended heavily of borrowing and/or hiring hoes for agricultural production. This indicated a serious crisis in peasant agriculture. This meant that though these households may have had land, labour and other agricultural inputs like seeds, still, cultivation remained a problem. It was learnt that agricultural activities would sometimes stop in case these two options were not available. Payment for hiring hoes was mostly in kind and calculated in a day's labour. This labour remuneration was said to extend to borrowed hoes. Another payment was in food form after harvest. Those who failed to obtain hoes through these two options resorted to cultivate with *obufuuni*. *Obufuuni* are normally used in weeding. They are also for children to practice with during their induction into the agricultural production process. There were many households where grownups used *obufuuni* in cultivation. This is shown in Table 4 below. From this table, adults in 41 per cent of the households used *obufuuni*. The study found that married women in 16 per cent of the households used *obufuuni*. There was one extreme case in which all the four female adults in the household used *obufuuni* in digging. Using these depreciated, toy-like *obufuuni* tools for their daily agricultural production undermined their production capacity, productivity, wasted their energy, time, morale and enthusiasm. All these reflected a serious agrarian crisis of gross under-utilisation of labour.

Table 3: Borrowing And Hiring Hoes For Production

Hoes	Borrow $\leq$	Borrow $\geq$	Borrow $\leq 2$	Borrow $\geq 3$	Total
Borrowed/Hired	2	3	& Hire $\leq 2$	& Hire $\geq 3$	
No. of Households	32	4	9	3	48

Source: Field Research

Table 4: Households With Adults Who Cultivate With *Obufuuni*

No. of <i>Obufuuni</i>	1-2	3-4	More than 4	Total
No. of Households	49	22	2	73

Source: Field Research

The study found that in situations where there was one big hoe, and *nyine eka* (head of household) happened to have *engaragazi* (private land), then, that hoe would be exclusively reserved for his agricultural work in his private garden. The same applied to the machete. In such situations, both these tools were masculinised. The other members of the household would go to borrow or hire hoes, use *obufuuni* or stop digging and do other household activities. Some would use that time to search for raw materials for weaving mats or containers. It was learnt that some individuals tried to solve the problem of lack of hoes by stealing



other people's hoes. Thus thefts of implements of production constituted another agrarian problem. All these show that women in peasant households have a complex burden on their shoulders of providing labour and its instruments through purchasing, borrowing or hiring. It is this which sometimes forces them to engage in *leija leija* (wage labour).

The current situation of hoes in Kigezi contrasts with the pre-colonial one. In pre-colonial Kigezi, the *Ababeesi* (smiths) would make Kikiga hoes at the request of the peasants. The peasants would take their raw materials of iron ore or old metal and charcoal to the *Ababeesi*. They would then make orders and specifications of the tools required. Both the amount to pay and the mode of payment were negotiable. Today, the tools are imported from the capitalist countries with bank loans and then sold at high, fixed prices. The problem of lack of local manufacturing of tools of production could partly explain the recurrence of the crisis of lack of tools of production. This is not to glorify the African past but to highlight the post-colonial crisis arising from the heavy dependence on imperialism.

### Crop Destruction as one of the Agrarian Problems

Though preventable, crop destruction by livestock has been a persistent menace to agriculture in agrarian Kigezi. This was underlined by the peasants as one of the main agrarian problems that they were facing. They disclosed that persistent crop destruction was causing additional hardships and famine within the affected households. The study unearthed enormous recurrent cases of crop destruction by animals and human beings, night grazing on growing crops or on upgraded pasturage in agrarian Kigezi. It was learnt that the cattle owners deliberately grazed on the growing crops to frustrate cultivation. The cultivators and pasturage owners accused the livestock owners of deliberately and maliciously releasing their animals into the people's gardens and pasturage. It was alleged that the aim was to frustrate crop production and force these lands to revert into grazing areas. This was found to be a persistent problem in one particular LC I in Rukungiri District. One respondent informed the researcher that when she enclosed her pasturage with *senjenje* (barbed wire), the cattle owners cut it to create passages for their cattle. Whenever she planted a hedge of *enyenje* plant, the cattle owners set it on fire. They frustrated her efforts and the night graziers gained unrestricted access to her pasturage. She sued some of them in their LC I Court, but no action was taken. Her explanation for this disinterestedness of their LC I Court was that some of the LC I officials including the Chairman were the culprits. She informed the researcher that she was contemplating to shift the cases to another court system.

On closer examination, it became clear to the study why these night graziers were targeting her pasturage. The first thing was that the culprits lacked pasture for their cattle and they did not have money to rent pasturage. Yet, she had enough pasture to feed ten heads of cattle although she owned only one cow. Worse still, they were aware that being a woman, she could not keep vigil at night to ward off night grazing from her pasturage. By night grazing such pasturage, the cattle owners were denying the pasture owners opportunities to rent it out to them for money. This is some form of resistance by the landless cattle owners. The study learnt that the aggrieved cultivators and pasturage owners could hit back through physical fights or by littering salted *obuveera* (plastic paper) in the pasturage. If a cow swallows the same, it fails to ruminate it and this results in the cow's death. The commonest form of struggle was through arbitration and suing for compensation. The study came across numerous cases of crop destruction by livestock, poultry and human beings. For purposes of this



study, we singled out only two cases of crop destruction by domestic animals.

The first case involved Tibaryebwa versus Byomuhangyi and Binugwa.<sup>22</sup> In this suit, the plaintiff accused both the defendants for compensation for his crops of beans, peas, and maize that were ravaged by the defendants' animals on 8 February 1983. The defendants were served with summons but they refused to appear in court. Court, therefore, entered interlocutory judgement against them and it proceeded to hear the case *ex parte*. The adage that laws are heavier than iron ore must have reminded them of the imminent dangers of non-court attendance. They shed off their recalcitrance and went to court to present their case. In his judgement on January 18, 1984, the magistrate dismissed their defence as mere equivocating denials. Court held in favour of the plaintiff and awarded him compensation of Shs. 6,000/= payable by both defendants with costs of the suit. Though this compensation might have been smaller than the ravaged crops and the other inconveniences, still, it established a principle of justice and defence for the cultivators. Such cases and judgements also help to break the hard-line and obstinacy characteristic of cattle keepers.

In the second case, Kwizera J. & Zirimwabagabo R. sued Himikamana J. for compensation of their crops of creeping beans and maize. They claimed that these crops were ravaged completely by the defendant's goats on December 21, 1989. The LC I Court heard the case at the *locus in quo* and charged the defendant. The defendant accepted the charge and the fine of Shs. 9,000/= for the ravaged crops. He, however, failed to pay it and the matter was transferred to the Magistrate's court.<sup>23</sup> During the subsequent court hearing, the defendant was very elusive and shift. He first admitted the charge, but later changed his plea and alleged that he had been forced to sign in the book by the LCs. He also challenged the fine as too big. Court heard the case and then visited the *locus in quo*.

In entering judgement on July 27, 1990, Court explained that the area where the goats trespassed, plus the labour spent, the seed planted, and what was supposed to be harvested far exceeded the defendant's propositions. Court took note that the defendant purposely and stubbornly refused to pay compensation by despising the LC Court that had first heard the case. Court found the plaintiffs' claims very fair and awarded them accordingly. They were claiming compensation of Shs. 10,000/= and Shs. 9,500/= respectively. Court also awarded to each of them Shs. 5,000/= as costs of the suit. Court explained that they had been turning up for this case for several times partly because of defendant's absence or because of his coming to court very late after the case had been called. The judgement debtor received a total bill of Shs. 29,500/=. Court underlined that in the event of failing to pay in time, money would earn interest or his property would be attached. The defendant appealed to the Chief Magistrate's Court in August, 1990 and the appeal was finally dismissed.

The two foregoing cases reveal the problem of crop destruction by livestock. They also bring out the dubious and sly character of the livestock owners. These cases reveal ways through which courts handle the evasive and elusive livestock owners when such cases occur. Despite these efforts, the problem is compounded by land fragmentation. Crops in the distant plots of land are most vulnerable to livestock destruction. It takes long before the crop owners learn of the crop destruction. It also becomes hard to trace the animals that ravaged the crops and to prove in Court that they were the actual animals that destroyed the crops. At the same time, these cases reveal the dilemma faced by the landless and land-poor peasants who own livestock without pasturage.



The facts from our study revealed a crisis that was confronting livestock keeping. Thirty nine per cent of the households owned at least a cow, with or without goats and sheep. Sixty six per cent of these owned at least two heads of cattle with or without goats and sheep. As many as sixty one per cent of these households depended on communal grazing land while only fourteen per cent households owned individual farms. The other households grazed alternately on their personal plots of land, resting land, communal grazing land and hired pastures. The same situation was confronting households that owned only goats and sheep. Twenty two per cent households owned at least a goat or sheep. Only three per cent of these were shepherding their livestock on their own land. All this reflects a serious pasturage crisis, which is part of the larger agrarian crisis. It, in fact, reinforces the urgency for broader agrarian solutions to cater for both crop production and animal husbandry. This further reveals that some of the crop destruction may not necessarily be deliberate and malicious but accidental. Moving the animals in-between intensively cultivated plots of land with growing crops sometimes results in unintended crop destruction. Others may break the tether or stray away from the pens and ravage crops. This, however, does not constitute apology for crop destruction or an appeal for them not to restrain their stock and fowls, and not to compensate the crops in case of destruction by their stock.

### **The World Bank Conception of the Agrarian Crisis and its Shortcomings**

The failure of the government to address the social economic problems in the country has left the agrarian crises unresolved. This present study has already examined how the isolated technical solutions have had limited achievements in Kigezi. The endemicity and enormity of this agrarian crisis in the country became interstitial for the World Bank to push the NRM government to implement the failed colonial programme of land titling. This is confirmed by the World Bank study of Uganda.<sup>24</sup> In examining this World Bank study, three things have to be borne in mind. The first one is the World Bank's active involvement in Uganda's politics and economy since independence. At independence, the World Bank became central in planning and advising the newly independent state.<sup>25</sup> It has continued to occupy this privileged position unquestioned, with its political and economic roles ever expanding. The second point to note is that Uganda faithfully implemented the bank's plans and advice. These landed Uganda into the economic and political crises right from 1968-1969. What the independence leadership failed to grasp was that the World Bank could be used for growing penetration of Uganda by the international circuits of capital.<sup>26</sup>

Thirdly, Uganda began to implement the SAP of IMF in 1981. Since then, it has systematically implemented SAP to the letter. Evidence of this includes the state's retraction from the economy, leaving the provision of social welfare of the population to the market forces. By mid-May 1987, Uganda had fulfilled the conditionalities of the IMF and the World Bank. These included devaluing the Uganda shilling by 77 per cent in foreign currency terms to Uganda Shs. 60/= per US dollar. It had also effected other monetary and fiscal instructions designed to reduce the monetary base. It had dismissed 30 per cent of the casual labourers and stopped the ministries of Agriculture and Animal Husbandry from handling agricultural and veterinary inputs.<sup>27</sup> The IMF, World Bank and the West began to proclaim Uganda as the most successful story of SAP. It is on this background that the World Bank's proposals have to be examined in order to be able to understand the possibilities of their implementation, their beneficiaries and victims.



In its renewed efforts to push for freehold land titles, the World Bank highlights the three pilot schemes in Ankole, Bugishu and Kigezi for "adjudicated" freehold title to small holders.<sup>28</sup> The work continues to posit a contradictory argument:

Fragmentation of holdings in the densely populated rural areas of the Southwest and the Northwest was considered. It is felt that administrative measures to contain this fragmentation (which would entail modification of inheritance law, and official and customary tenure law) have not been successful in other parts of Africa. The experience in Kenya of trying to force consolidation of plots and prevent fragmentation in high density areas has not been successful. The process of fragmentation is likely to continue until economic non-viability of plot size forces sale and consolidation. If allowed to operate freely, normal transactions in the land market will produce consolidation of holdings once untenably minute sizes are reached.

The World Bank ended conceding that the operation of a land market was a delicate area and appeared to work well in most areas under traditional tenure systems.<sup>29</sup> The question then is why it turned round and recommended within the same work for the dissolution of these tenure systems through legislation for freehold tenure. While aware of the lack of employment opportunities in agrarian and urban sectors of the country, it advocated for the depeasantisation of millions through the argument that freehold tenure would reduce the land-related barriers to migration by labour and small farmers that were inherent in many customary tenure systems.<sup>30</sup> Yet, it did not explain where the depeasantised masses would go. This was a reincarnation of neo-classical economics that was discredited epistemologically and practically through the failure of the modernisation project in the 1960s and 1970s.

The 1988 study attributed the abundant stunting among children to lack of proteins. It went on to put the blame on bananas and potatoes which it cited as the main staple food in Kabale District. It lamented how intensive researches on sorghum and millet had not produced any positive effects. Its explanation for this failure was that these crops had responded relatively little to fertilisers and that they did not offer any immediate prospects for profitable fertiliser use. It further noted that they offered no future prospects to increased yields with a financially attractive package of seed or inputs. Thus, the work presented a grave situation for the peasant mode of production in Kabale District. The question to ask here is: how correct and factual are these submissions? Historical evidence shows that since the inception of colonialism in Uganda in 1894, the research priorities have been defined by and confined to cash crop production. Opio Odong explains that research on traditional crops has attracted little attention, despite the enormous agricultural researches since the inception of colonialism. He explains that agricultural researches were exclusively on the prized export crops and their results could not, therefore, have any effect on traditional agriculture. Their research results had exclusive export bias with an anti-food bias, and were against the improvement of local farming techniques. As such, they did not benefit the peasants. They instead heralded the peasants' extinction.<sup>31</sup>

Evidence from Kigezi reveals a similar trend. A lot of well-funded, continuous researches have been conducted on the imported varieties of Kigezi potatoes (*Solanum tuberosum* L.) despite the crop's low food values and low rateability. To demonstrate this, five researches were carried out on this crop in Kabale District between August 1995 and July 1996. By



then, scientists had developed 19 cultivars of this crop and these were being planted in Kabale and Kisoro Districts.<sup>32</sup> Yet, there were no researches on the local varieties of this crop or on the staple crops. The Kabale District Agricultural Officer (DAO) informed the researcher of the department's continuous problems in trying to obtain seeds from Kawanda Research Centre. The district was frustrated by the Research Centre's non-research on highland sorghum varieties for areas like Kigezi.<sup>33</sup> Even if these crops responded well to these fertilisers, still the research findings would not benefit the peasants, as they would be too expensive for them. It cannot be ignored that the peasants in Kigezi are averse to the use of artificial fertilisers. Their main concern is that artificial fertilisers cause irreversible derogation of the soil. Their fear is that this process will make them dependent on the use of fertilisers. Contrary to the World Bank's explanation, my long experience in the agrarian setting revealed that both these crops do well with compost and manure.

The deep concentration of the researches on the Kigezi potatoes instead of promoting one of the traditional staple food crops has a variety of explanations. First, food is cultural and political. To impose such a crop onto a people gradually makes them dependent on that crop. Table 5 reveals the food values of this crop vis-à-vis the other staple crops in Kigezi. The long-term implications of growing this crop on massive scale are not yet known as no serious nutritional, biological, sociological and environmental researches have been commissioned by government on the crop and its production. What is highly probable is that a successful establishment of this crop in this agrarian economy will lead to the inevitable undermining and displacement of the traditional food crops. The nearest examples are the traditional seed varieties of this crop that have been phased out. It is also likely to lead to heavy dependence on importation of agricultural inputs ranging from the new seed varieties to chemicals for spraying and fertilisers. It is also likely to facilitate the spread of new pathogens - both bacterial, fungal and pests. All these require ready money. There are enormous risks of leaving the peasants and the country at the mercy of such externally-defined cropping. Any collapsing of such a project will spell doom to the peasants. The country is likely to be dependent on foreign inputs in form of expertise, knowledge and other inputs in these researches and projects. All these are threats to the peasants' existence, the national economy and the country's sovereignty.

The government continues to rank Kabale District among the highest producers of beans, peas, sorghum, millet and potatoes. The Table 5 below shows how these staple foods have very high nutritional value in calorific content, proteins, fats and carbohydrates. As such, the explanation for protein deficiency cannot be sought in production alone but also in the disposal of food. Much of the crop is commoditised, leaving very little for household consumption. In her study of 1981, Batarirana found that households in Nyakagyeme Gombolola sold most of what they produced.<sup>34</sup> In the current study, 99 per cent of the households sold food of varying quantities. The two households that did not engage in food sales did not have any land to produce food crops.

This commoditisation of food reflected the intensification of the capital penetration in the agrarian setting. The nature of food sales demonstrates another dimension of the agrarian crisis. The crisis stems from the fact that most food sales are carried out during harvest time. The peasants are in many cases hard-pressed for cash for household requirements, debt repayment, state obligations or children's education. The traders move in the agrarian setting to buy the crops at cheap prices. Vegetable growers are more vulnerable to this form of



crisis due to the fragility and perishability of the vegetable crop. The traders take advantage of this and buy the whole crop. This is known as *okujumura*. While *okujumura* creates some competition amongst the traders, it may not necessarily be translated in the prices offered to the peasant producers. The producer remains disadvantaged in this transaction due to various factors. Amidst the pressing demands for money, the crop may not yet be ready or it will be ready and threatened by rotting. This is complicated by absence of a viable market nearby where the peasants can sell their crops before they get spoiled. The advantage with *okujumura* is that the growers get the money in a consolidated form. At the same time, the crop risks are thenceforth transferred to the buyer. Its disadvantage is that all the profits accrue to the traders. At the same time, the buyer may deliberately detain the land from the next season's agricultural production by refusing to harvest the whole crop from the garden. The *okujumura* deprives the household of the right to partake of this crop. Through *okujumura*, the household is compelled to forfeit the product to the buyer and the seller. All the different forms of food sales by households exposes the children to the high vulnerability of food deficiency. Another explanatory variable is the actual accessibility of the food. Issues of prime importance revolve around who eats what food and in what proportion, how much food is apportioned for the children, how much of the crop is wasted in alcohol brewing, feasts and other social and political functions.

*Table 5: Nutritional Values Of Major Food Crops In Kigezi  
(Nutrient Content per 100 gm. Edible Portion)*

CROP	CALORIES	PROTEIN (gm)	FAT	CHOs (gm)
SORGHUM	354	10.2	2.8	72.1
MILLET	346	8.7	2.9	71.2
BEANS	330	19.5	1.4	60
FIELD PEAS	330	22.4	1.4	57.0
S. POTATOES	116	1.3	0.3	32.8
BANANAS	100	1.5	0.2	23.3
K. POTATOES	75	2.0		17.0

Source: Food Consumption Tables: (Nutrition Division), Ministry of Health, Uganda. Quoted from Export Policy Analysis Unit, Food Security and Export, Vol. I, August 1995, p. 4.

In most areas of Kigezi, the staple food includes sorghum, millet, beans, peas and sweet potatoes. While most of these staple food crops constitute complete meals in themselves, there have been spirited administrative efforts to replace them with commodity crops like wheat, kigezi potatoes, coffee, tobacco and pyrethrum. It is their nutritional values, coupled with the peasants' long-term constructed and accumulated epistemes and institutional experiences that explain the peasants' resistance to the recent efforts to make them abandon the production of these staple crops and embark on market-oriented crops. These point to the need for deep scientific researches into these neglected traditional crops with the object of increasing their productivity. Though kigezi potatoes and bananas are part of the food regimens in Kigezi, still, the peasants rate them lowly. They are mainly produced as commodity

crops in most parts of Kigezi to meet the middle class food demands.

### The Nutritional Crisis in the Agrarian Setting

The food situation in Kigezi was alarming during the present study. Over 94 per cent of the households were experiencing famine. This famine was attributed to various causes including long droughts followed by heavy rains. These natural disasters were able to assail the peasants because of the absence of concrete food security measures in Kigezi and in the country. So, by the time the drought and the subsequent heavy rains hit the area, the peasants did not have food reserves for their sustenance. The other related causes included landlessness, or degenerated unproductive land, population pressure, poverty and unemployment. The crisis of nutrition is widespread. Faced with this rampant famine, our study focused on the peasants' intake of meat and milk. It was considered that the intake pattern of animal products would not change drastically due to the weather vagaries. The study adopted the peasants' conception of meat, which includes pork, chicken and duck. The peasants rank meat and milk among the most valuable foods. It needs to be clarified here that there are no vegetarians by volition in Kigezi.

Table 6: Household Meat Consumption Annually

No. of Times of Meat Intake	0	1-2	3-4	5-12	≥ 13	Total
No. of Households (Percentage)	27	18	10	9	36	100

Source: Field Research.

Table 6 shows a low intake of animal products in the area. From the table, 27 per cent of the households did not eat meat at all throughout the year, while 18 per cent of households ate meat once or twice a year. Most of those who ate meat once a year said that eating meat depended on luck. In other words, some of them could end up not eating it at all. Some of them ate meat during Christmas or wedding festivities. Many of those who ate meat twice a year ate it during religious festivals. Having 45 per cent of households not accessing meat and few of them accessing it once or twice a year, while another 10 per cent eat it three to four times a year indicates a serious nutritional problem in the area. This cannot be taken as a general problem, however, since 36 per cent of the households eat meat at least once a month.

There are various explanations for the differences in accessibility of meat. This may be due to class differences, the sources of the money to purchase food or the source of the meat itself. Other factors include the household's consciousness about the importance of good feeding, food values and balancing diets. There are some peasants that receive money for food from their working children and relatives. While such households may be belonging to the poor peasant class, still, they will afford to eat meat. Others may eat meat when their livestock and poultry die. Others buy meat on credit and go to work for money to pay for the meat or they may get meat on *encuro* terms. *Encuro* is a mode through which one receives a commodity and has to provide labour power as a form of payment for it. Some peasants may get meat on barter terms if a cow dies. In this case, the quantum, mode of payment and duration of the loan are first agreed upon.

Lack of meat does not mean that there is no meat in the peasant setting. There is meat on sale on market days and in the trading centres. The point is that many peasants cannot afford to buy it. This was evidenced during the field research. Among the markets and trading centres that we visited was the Rwamatunguru Market, at the Kamwezi-Rwanda border.



The object of these visits was to assess the food situation in the market and the nature of transactions. By 9.00 a.m., meat of thirteen slaughtered cattle was already displayed for sale. Yet, its sales were sluggish. The study learnt that much of the meat, food items and manufactured goods were mainly bought by the Rwandans that came from across the border to attend the market. Another section that bought meat included traders and other people from different parts of the country who attended the market. This revealed that availability of commodities in the market did not imply food availability in households. The determinant factor was the capacity to purchase it. In fact, the propinquity of this market to the border was an indication that the market aimed at meeting the demands of the Rwandans and the locals. This market had been transferred from the Gombolola headquarters at Buhangizi, about three kilometres inland. Another factor to note is that some areas with few livestock have less chances of accessing meat and other animal products.

*Table 7: Livestock And Poultry Ownership At Household Level*

Livestock	Owning at least 1 cow	At least 1 stock but no cow	At least 1 Pig	At least 1 rabbit	At least 1 Chicken
No. Of Household (Percentage)	39	24	14	12	63

*Figures From Field Research*

As Table 7 shows, some households still own some domestic animals and fowls. From this table, 39 per cent of the households owned at least a cow with or without any other stock or fowl. Many of these households owned two or more head of cattle and other domestic animals. This implies that these households could access different food products apart from the cows. The study further found that 28 per cent of the households owned cows and other stock. Two households with the highest number of goats owned thirty goats each and cows. One of these households owned twenty cows and the other one owned seven cows. Twenty four per cent of the households owned at least a goat or sheep but without any cow. Sixty three per cent of the households owned at least a chicken. The household with the highest number of chickens had a hundred chickens. This belonged to a Gombolola Chief. Another household owned forty chickens. This excepted six households that owned only one chicken apiece. The household with the highest number of pigs owned twelve of them. The household with the highest number of rabbits owned twenty rabbits. In all cases, there were households owning only one domestic animal.

These are important as sources of a variety of nutritional foods such as milk, meat, ghee, pork and eggs. The major agrarian problem in Kigezi is that all the nutritious products are reserved for sale. In other words, whatever has potential for improving their nutritional status is reserved for the market. To the peasant household, they also mean lifetime savings. They constitute wealth for the household and their reproduction implies the multiplication and increase of the household's wealth. Cows, goats and sheep are also crucial in settling dowries for wives. These domestic animals and fowls are also a source of manure for agricultural purposes.

Another point to note is *muchomo* (roasted meat) sold in different trading centres and urban areas. More individuals access meat in this form as it is low-priced and does not involve any

labour by the buyer. The problem with this form of meat is that the members of the households that do not wander around in the trading centres and urban areas cannot get chance to partake of it. That way, *muchomo* becomes a preserve for those household members that are abstracted from the production process. Having examined the meat consumption at household level, we now turn to milk intake within households.

Table 8: Household Milk Consumption Monthly

No. of Times of Milk Intake	0	1-2	3-4	5-10	11-20	Daily	Total
No. of Households	53	11	9	11	7	9	100
(Percentages)							

Source: Field Research

Table 9: Conversion Factors/Nutritional Values Of Animal Products:  
(Nutrient Content per 100 gm. Edible Portion).

FOOD ITEM	CALORIES	PROTEIN (gm)	FAT	CHOs (gm)
MILK	64	3.2	3.7	4.7
BEEF	202	11.0	14.0	
MUTTON/GOAT MEAT	145	16.0	9.0	
CHICKEN	200	20.0	12.0	

Source: "Food Consumption Tables": (Nutrition Division), Ministry of Health, Uganda. Quoted from "Export Policy Analysis Unit Food Security and Export", Vol. I, August 1995, p. 4.

Milk intake at household level presented another dismal picture in Kigezi. Table 8 shows that 53 per cent of the households did not drink milk at all throughout the month while 11 per cent households accessed it once or twice a month. The study learnt that 93 per cent of those households that did not access milk in a month could not access it at all throughout the year. One household drank milk twice a year, during Easter and Christmas. In another household, the members accessed it only when one of them fell sick. Twenty per cent of the households accessed milk less than five times a month. Only 16 per cent of the households took milk more than ten times a month. This section of society was in a better situation to access animal products.

The low intake of meat and milk can be explained by the raging poverty in the agrarian setting, the unavailability of livestock and money. While some households sometimes access milk from their cows, others sell all the milk for money. All milk in Kigezi comes from cows. The study found that 39 per cent of the households owned at least a cow. The household with the highest number of cattle had 60 head of cattle. The second one had 20 head of cattle, the third one had 15 and two households had 10 head of cattle apiece. At the same time, few households could afford to buy milk. These include traders, rich peasants, landowners, teachers, local administrators, rural artisans and households that received money for food from their children. Incidentally, it is this category that also affords to eat meat. This serious lack of milk intake has great bearings on the peasants' lives, on the eruption of diseases, stunting of children, malnutrition and underweight. This is borne out by the facts in



the Table 9 on the nutritional values of animal products.

## **The Current Labour Situation**

The peasant economy has continued to be a repository of redundant, unemployed labour. The men and the youth within Kigezi have increasingly shunned agricultural work. Yet, the agrarian economy lacks alternative gainful employment opportunities for them other than manual work involving construction, transportation, milking, squeezing bananas and brewing beer, felling trees and burning charcoal. It needs to be pointed out here that some females also abandon household labour processes and go to urban areas in search of better employment opportunities.

The present study found that peasant women participated in virtually all the household activities. Earlier case studies had brought out similar findings. Focusing on the time spent by women in household agricultural activities in Nyakagyeme Gombolola, Rukungiri, Batarirana found that the women and the children were the ones who engaged in food production while the men grew cash crops. Another development was the increasing drudgery for women, wherein the women were also doing work customarily considered to be done by men. This was partly because of wage labour migration by men.<sup>35</sup> She found that agricultural activities intensified during the rainy season. The peasants had to spend all their time in the gardens and eat one meal a day. There were two explanations which she unearthed. Some households lacked time to prepare meals while others lacked the food to prepare.<sup>36</sup> The present study found that 59 per cent of the households depended on women's labour for agricultural activities. 43 per cent of the households did not hire any labour at all. Children constituted another important category of household labour even during the ongoing Universal Primary Education programme. Children's labour was used in fetching firewood and water, looking after livestock and caring for children. It was found that men spent their time outside productive activities like drinking alcohol or lousing in trading centres. Such a situation where men were resorting to full-time alcoholism, without injecting money in agriculture to hire labour or use of tractors or ploughs clearly manifested extreme drudgery of women and children. Batarirana had noted this drudgery eighteen years earlier and she called for measures to alleviate the women's plight and exploitation. It has negative implications for output, productivity, accumulation, health of the labouring people and on their participation in political and social activities.

The present study found that many peasants engaged in wage labour within the agrarian economy for different reasons. Many peasants worked for wages for survival or to augment their produce. Others engaged in it when they did not have agricultural activities on their hands. Some engaged in it in order to convert their labour and time into monetary form. They would later on use the same money to hire labour for agricultural activities. It was found that some employers delayed to remunerate labour until after they had harvested the crop and sold it. This was commonly applied to the poor peasantry, the *ebibiina* (groups or associations or cooperatives or societies) and church labour. Another finding was that women normally engaged in *leija leija* (casual labour), *patana* (contract labour) and *ebibiina*. It was male labour that normally engaged in long-term employment. It was through this mechanism that the women's labour became casualised, localised and confined to agricultural activities. The female labour constituted the majority of the casual wage labour. The women entered and exited the wage labour market at any time of the year without being detained from



household labour requirements and biological reproduction. The landless peasants also tended to follow the same pattern. The study found that the female labour from these two categories was hired for wages and food. The explanation lay in the locus of women in the household economies, social and biological reproduction.

A look at the remuneration for labour revealed highly exploitative relations. During the field research, *leija leija* labour was paid Shs. 700/= to Shs. 1,000/= a day while monthly wages ranged between Shs. 20,000/= and Shs. 45,000/=. Work started around 8.00 a.m. and ended around 4.00 p.m. to 5.00 p.m. This meant working for eight to nine hours a day for an equivalent of a dollar. Yet the workers had to take their provisions and tools of production. This reflected super-exploitation of wage labour. Then there were those who worked for money and food. Another category worked for food – *Abacwi b'encuro*. *Abacwi b'encuro* worked under similar conditions. This category of labourers could be offered lunch and tools of production. The difference between these two forms of labour was in the form and mode of remuneration. *Abacwi b'encuro* would be instantaneously paid while the other forms of wage labour could be paid later. This study and the earlier ones found that employers preferred to employ three forms of wage labour: - migrant labour, female labour and child labour. The explanation for this lay in the cheapness of such labour and lack of labour disputes due to its high vulnerability. There was a wide range of methods through which the migrant labour could be exploited. Being mostly resident labour in the employers' premises, migrant labour would perform much more work outside normal working hours. The employers also preferred it because it insulated them from the nagging of local labour for prompt payment before completing the work, or on its completion. Group labour in form of *ebibiina* and church labour were also preferred. This was because group labour performed the work quickly while the form and mode of payment were negotiable.

The study found that a lot of wage labour was employed by the capitalists and the rich peasants for commercial agriculture. These were the classes that accumulated a lot of land and resources. They hired a lot of labour at meagre wages, overworked it, and fixed time for completion of the work. It enabled them to cultivate the land quickly, plant and weed crops in season and these would result in good harvests. The respondents' calculations showed that a worker's daily labour input could produce crops worth Shs. 10,000/=. The capitalists and the rich peasants also benefited from negotiating the terms and mode of remunerating the labourers. The inherent adversities of this labour also favoured the employers. This wage labour was predominantly part-time, target-oriented and most of it provided its own accommodation. This implied that it was unorganised labour and the employers had a stronger bargaining power over it. The wage labour situation was further undermined by the unemployment crisis in the agrarian setting.

The main form of wage labour in the agrarian setting involves digging, working in plantations, grazing cattle, building, pit-sawing, loading trucks, carrying things on heads or on bicycles locally known as *boba boda* and on wheelbarrows locally known as *ebigaari*. Others worked as domestics in people's homes. Remuneration was in form of wages, food, shelter, paying taxes for the labourer, and discarded clothes. The resident labourers were exposed to super-exploitation through working in the field and the domestic work in the evening. One respondent summed up the dismal life of the poor peasant women in her area thus: "They hire land, work in other people's banana plantations for bananas to feed their households. The hair of their minute children remains brown. They do not get sufficient, balanced food. They eat



*embihire*<sup>37</sup> most of the time. They drink water instead of milk and porridge. Their children do not attend school. The women are responsible for the households' upkeep and clothing." These were indicators of a serious agrarian problem. There are many people who do not get these options or who find it difficult to engage in them. Many of them end up being *emibiri* or *emiyaaye* (riffraff).

Poverty, socio-economic and political obligations were the main driving forces for the majority of the peasants to labour for others for wages and/or food. These compulsions included food, education, individual and household requirements, government and religious obligations, building requirements, debt repayment, purchasing land, or renting land, alcohol purchases or marriage expenses or court fines. It was found that some people were working for beer and cooked food. These were mainly men, youth and juveniles. These constituted a form of floating labour. The study found that skilled labour was hired at higher rates. Examples included canoe pilots and drivers who were hired at Shs. 2,500/= per day.

Despite the economic crises that have prevailed in Uganda since 1968-69, it was found that wage labour migration has been on the increase in the past decade. Thirty three per cent of the respondents had gone outside for wage labour. 42 per cent of these went out between 1945-1985, while 58 per cent went out between 1986 - 1997. This was an indication that wage labour migration has been on the increase since 1986. This was further confirmed by the fact that 18 per cent of them went into wage labour in 1996 alone. Forty five per cent of these had stayed outside the district in wage labour for more than seven months at a stretch. Such duration in wage labour indicated the stability of wage labour.

### **The New Forms of De-agrarianisation Through Loans**

It needs to be pointed out at the outset that wheat is a colonial crop. Wheat growing was started by colonial chiefs in 1914.<sup>38</sup> Since then, there have been continuous efforts by the administration, organisations and individuals to expand its growing as a commodity crop. Despite these efforts, the growing of wheat has been taken up cautiously and selectively by a few peasants. One explanation is that the wheat crop has failed to hegemonise itself as a staple food and has remained a cash crop. Its production has been fluctuating in response to the demand on the market and lack of improved seeds. This explains why its production increased in the mid-1970s but declined by 1984. By then, the district appealed for improved seed, and government funding of this wheat and barley project.<sup>39</sup> Within two years, the Kabale DAO lamented that Uganda Breweries had stopped buying sorghum from Kigezi for brewing *Serena* beer. He explained that the administration was making spirited efforts to expand wheat growing and wanted to introduce barley in Kigezi as commodity crops. The decade-old wheat and barley production project at Echuya with funding from the Saudi Arabian Government had wound up as the fund had become exhausted. The agricultural department had taken it over and it intended to multiply wheat and barley seeds for farmers. It was further reported that the Uganda Grain Millers Company had come in to encourage the peasants in Kabale district to grow more wheat. The peasants were being assisted with procurement of seed and other agricultural inputs. The Nile Breweries was going to appoint an officer-in-charge of the wheat and barley project. This was clear testimony that the prime administrative concern was commodity production.<sup>40</sup> Since then, the agricultural department, the administration, individuals and organisations have been pushing for expansion of wheat production. This was repeated ten years later by the Resident District Commisisoner after



the subsidence of the Rwanda incursions into Kigezi.<sup>41</sup> The Kigezi Co-operative Union Ltd. took control of the wheat production process. It sold and loaned out wheat seeds and other inputs to the wheat producers and it bought their wheat crop. In its wheat scheme, it charged an interest rate of 100 per cent per annum for its wheat loan. It is this high interest rate and the laxity of the borrowers that later turned this wheat growing into another disastrous agrarian problem, ruining and de-agrarianising the peasants. We examine herebelow only three cases of wheat loan defaulting to show their perilous consequences.

In March 1993, the Kigezi Co-operative Union Ltd. loaned 300 kgs. of wheat seed to Mrs. L. Bakeihahwenki;<sup>42</sup> 200 kgs. to Mrs. S. Musinguzi;<sup>43</sup> and Mrs. L. Tindimutuma<sup>44</sup> apiece at an interest rate of 100 per cent per annum. The three failed to pay back the loans and the Cooperative Society, therefore, took legal action against them severally. In these suits, it was demanding a refund of 600 kgs. of wheat or the equivalent Shs. 150,000/= from Mrs. Bakeihahwenki, and 400 kgs. of wheat seed or the equivalent of Shs. 100,000/= from each of the other two defendants.

In the subsequent court hearing, the defendants accepted the charges and agreed to pay back the loan and the costs. Court entered judgement in favour of the Plaintiff Society, awarded it damages and costs. The first defendant received a total bill of Shs. 355,500/= while each of the other defendants received a bill of Shs. 277,900/= on December 12, 1994. They, however, failed to pay these bills. On January 18, 1995, Court issued warrants for their arrest before February 23, 1995.

Mrs. Musinguzi and Mrs. Tindimutuma did not have the money to pay and their arrest and imprisonment was imminent. Rev. Fr. Bitariho intervened on behalf of Mrs. Musinguzi on February 21, 1995 and guaranteed to pay the bill within two weeks. Court, therefore, ordered stay of the Warrant of her Arrest. Mrs. Tindimutuma was arrested and brought to court on February 21, 1995. Rev. Fr. Bitariho stood surety for her. He promised to pay the total bill plus the execution costs of Shs. 20,000/=. Yet, no payment was made in the latter case for over four months. Court issued a Warrant to Bitariho on June 27, 1995 to appear before court on July 14, 1995 and show cause why he should not be imprisoned in execution of the decree.

On the face of it, these wheat seed loans appear mutually beneficial to the involved parties. They must have appeared attractive to the peasants as it implied paying two wheat grains for every wheat grain borrowed. The study learnt from the interviews with Dan Beitwenda, the Counsel for the Co-operative Union, and the people from the area that some peasants were benefiting from this wheat loan facility. The question then arises as to what happened to all the peasants that the society sued over wheat debt defaulting. There were no crop failures and the defendants did not present any extenuatory defence. The present study was informed that the defendants did not plant the borrowed wheat seed but instead sold it for money. They hoped to buy wheat cheaply at harvest time and pay back the loan. This is like the proverbial teeth that scorned the unplanted garden after munching the seed for planting. The borrowers seem to have underestimated this loan. They did not think of the consequences of debt defaulting. In fact, some defaulters ended up in prison where they were subjected to unpaid hard labour and other harsh conditions until they had cleared the bill. Faced with the problem of money, such peasants would be forced to sell their property to repay the bills. This loan facility and the subsequent debt recovery mechanism have set in motion a process of impoverishing and depeasantising the peasants. There are other loaning agencies in Kigezi



with similar consequences. These include the NGOs, individual proprietors and the government.<sup>45</sup>

The developments in this wheat loan scheme reveal the peasants' misapprehension of debts being inherently a problem. The maximum wheat loan in these cases was 300 kgs. This would appear too much seed for peasant cultivation in Kigezi where the land question is so acute. Even if they planted it through the uneconomic broadcasting method, still, borrowing two or three sacks of wheat seed reflected other ulterior pecuniary interests. After all, the cheapest and most convenient way of procuring seeds would have been to borrow money from *ebibūna* or individuals and buy the wheat seed. They, however, failed to realise that in that seemingly simple loan lay their ruin. Thus a wheat seed loan valued at Shs. 75,000/= had by the end of the case increased seven times. These costs were additional to the defendants' personal expenses in the case, imprisonment, psychological torture and inconveniences. These events show that these peasants lacked prior experience of such credit systems and that they did not know the consequences of defaulting. The defendants' unresponsiveness to the impending court action, plus their failure to negotiate with the creditor union for debt-rescheduling or for phased-debt repayment and the failure of some of them to attend court hearings raise doubts about their misapprehension of the vicious ruinous character of capital and the law.

The Co-operative Union-bank loan complex brings out the new forms of intensive capital accumulation. The bank earns interest on the loans that it extends to the Co-operative Union. The latter then uses the loan to procure agricultural inputs to loan out to the peasants at an interest or sell to them at a profit. It also dominates the wheat trade in the area. Then, the capitalists and the rich peasants and highly placed people in service benefit from buying cheaply the peasants' property through the subsequent involuntary property sales in the debt-recovery exercise. All these reveal the mechanisms through which the lending institutions with the help of the courts are accelerating the process of land commoditisation in Kigezi.

The fact that 50 per cent of the judgement debtors were women poses a question. If Kigezi society is highly patriarchal and polygamous, the question that arises is: in what circumstances do men sell their property to rescue their wives? The explanation is that no person wants to stand in the court's path. When Court passes judgement against a person, then, the social constructs of gender and minorities become irrelevant. Societal justice demands collective responsibility to salvage a member of the community from prison. As such, the husband will sell whatever property available to rescue the wife. Secondly, the peasants have learnt from bitter experience that the Court will still send its Brokers to auction the available property and recover the money. Thirdly, these cases of wheat defaulting were genuine. The loans were contracted in the interest of the household. As such, it became a collective household responsibility to redeem the victim. There are also other factors like love, family esteem and responsibility. A head of a household is judged by society basing on the way he or she manages the affairs of the household. That is where the title *Nyineeka* (the owner of a home) for head of the household is derived. Another explanation is that men normally find problems in managing the affairs of the households when the wives are away. A positive lesson from these cases is that the women in Kigezi take on heavy obligations and commitments for their families.

These cases demonstrate a new process of impoverishment and depeasantisation in agrarian Kigezi. They show that loans in themselves can neither resolve the agrarian crisis nor ameliorate it. They also show the peasants' ignorance of the inherent dangers in loans,



coupled with their lack of knowledge of how to invest them profitably and ensure prompt debt repayment. They show that the peasants enter these transactions without careful analysis of the total debt burden, the possibilities and complications involved. Court actions against debt defaulting have proved very disastrous to the peasant borrowers as they lead to heavy costs and imprisonment. Many of the affected peasants end up losing their property through public auction by the Court Brokers to recover the debts.

As earlier noted, these cases bring to light the dangers of acquiring loans without clear knowledge of their dangers and the proper ways to manage them. They show that lack of knowledge to invest them has high possibilities of ruining the peasants. Thus, they illustrate that the problem is broader than loans per se. These issues underline the urgency for intervention by the state, LCs, politicians, civic organisations and organic intellectuals to educate the peasants about all the possible scenarios of these loans, the imbedded dangers and pitfalls in them. These issues are further buttressed by a bank loan that Besiime got from a Kabale Centenary Rural Development Bank in 1995. The bank advanced a loan of Shs. 5,000,000/= to Mrs. E. Besiime at the request of her husband as a guarantor in July 1995. The interest rate on this loan was 22 per cent per annum. This debt was to be paid by 25 September 1995. He, however, failed to pay it and the bank took action against him in February 1996, claiming Shs. 1,964,200/= as the remaining amount that he owed it.<sup>46</sup> Court passed judgement in favour of the plaintiff bank with costs. The Judgement Debtor received a total bill of Shs. 2,356,200/= in March 1996. He failed to pay and court issued a Warrant to the Court Brokers on 4 June 1996 ordering for the attachment and auctioning of Besiime's property in Ntungamo town and recover Shs. 2,356,200/= as decretal sum, interest thereon and costs for the court brokers' fees for carrying out the execution.

## Conclusion

This discourse highlighted the existence of a virulent and malignant agrarian crisis in Kigezi. This is demonstrated *inter alia*, by an increasing land shortage and/or landlessness hand-in-hand with intensive over-cultivation of land. These have been having adverse consequences on the quantum and productivity of the available land. There is an expanding agrarian population which cannot reproduce itself on the available agrarian resources. The study further brought out the centrality and cruciality of land in this agrarian setting both for commercial, household consumption and insurance against old age. It also brought out the negative consequences of lack of agrarian property on the production, security and politics of households and on their continuity.

This chapter examined the different forms of agrarian struggles and their causes at different levels in Kigezi. These ranged from physical struggles to grabbing of communal/common resources, especially swamps to forced sales of household property. Others included struggles between the cultivators and the graziers. The paper brought to light the different roles of courts in addressing these struggles. The study also brought out the locus and effects of alcoholism and its expansion in Kigezi.

It then examined the ways through which the agrarian population try to survive. These ranged from borrowing food and agrarian property for use and to hiring agrarian property and instruments of production such as land, tools of production like hoes and seeds. Others included executing labour either for wages or for payment in kind especially for food, clothes, alcohol, etc. Others included selling or pawning of agrarian property, staying with relatives, etc.



This chapter also examined the exploitative relationships in this agrarian economy. It explored the consequences of polygamy on the agrarian crisis. The few reviewed Court cases revealed increasing criminality, violence and homicides in this raging crisis. Others included incredibility in food sales, the forms it takes and the politics surrounding it; the factors and circumstances that dictated sales of food and other agrarian property at household levels, and problems faced. The unchecked increasing land sales – land purchase and accumulation in the peasantry setting, etc.

It brought out problems of lack of instruments of production such as the hoe, and its impact on production, the different alternative ways through which they resolve such problems. The paper then reviewed cases on crop destruction as a major agrarian problem in Kigezi, and the forces that were unleashing a process of depeasantisation.

The study brought out problems of lack of research interest in indigenous food crops – all research being focused on export crops and imported food crops for commercial purposes – all of which was ensuring further integration of the area into the western capitalist system. It brought out new forms of intensification of capital penetration through wholesale economic activities.

In examining the nutritional status of the agrarian population, the analysis revealed a nutritional crisis in Kigezi. It brought out important findings on the labour situation – both at household level and in the area. It exposed gendered forms of exploitation which women, assisted by children, were engaged in most of household activities while men resorted to full time alcohol drinking. The study concluded examining new forms of de-agrarianisation through loans.

## Notes

- 1 Kim Lindblade et al (1996) *More People, More Fallow: Environmentally Favourable Land-Use Changes in South-Western Uganda*, Rockefeller Foundation, p. 56.
- 2 Kim Lindblade, et al (1996) *ibid* p. 56.
- 3 *ibid*, p. 54.
- 4 Apollo Nsibambi, "Conflict and The Land Question in Uganda", MISR Conference on Conflict held on September 21-25, 1987.
- 5 J. W. Purseglove, (1950) "Resettlement in Kigezi", *Uganda Journal* Vol. 14, No. 2, p. 144.  
—— (1951) "Land Use in the Overpopulated Areas of Kabale, Kigezi District", *East African Agricultural Journal*. Vol. 12, pp. 3-12. He was a colonial agricultural officer sent at the end of 1944 with express orders to study the land question and soil fertility, then plan and inaugurate resettlement of the surplus population in Kigezi. As will be shown later in this work, his assignment was part of the larger British colonial project solution to the agrarian crises in colonies.
- 6 Expedit Ddungu (1991) *A Review of the MISR-Wisconsin Land Tenure Centre Study on Land Tenure and Agricultural Development in Uganda*. Kampala: CBR Working Paper No. 11.
- 7 *Ibid*, pp. 6-8.
- 8 Kim Lindblade et al (1996) p. 2.
- 9 Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning, *Food Security And Export*. EPAU Statistical Publication No. 2, Vol. I, 1995.
- 10 *Ibid*, p. 54.
- 11 *Ibid*, p. 10.
- 12 In addition to these respondents' view, see files from Kigezi Resettlement Office, cited in Murindwa Rutanga (1996) "A Historical Analysis of the Labour Question in Kigezi District", in Mahmood Mamdani (ed) *Uganda: Studies in Labour*. Dakar: CODESRIA. Also see National Environmental Information Centre (1994) *State of the Environment Report for Uganda*, Kampala, p. 125.

- 13 J.T. Kakitahi, Kabale District Level Preparation of Action Plans for Nutrition, Food & Agricultural Organisation, March, 1997, p. 4.
- 14 Uganda National Council for Children (1994) Equity and Vulnerability: A Situation Analysis of Women, Adolescents, and Children in Uganda. Uganda Government.
- 15 J. T. Kakitahi, op. cit.
- 16 See May Edel (1957) *The Chiga of South Western Uganda*, New York: Oxford University Press.
- 17 See list of cases. Also see Murindwa Rutanga, 1996, op. cit.
- 18 Enyamwonyo are the edible varieties of bananas. They are cooked or roasted before eating.
- 19 Embihire are bitter varieties of bananas. They are grown exclusively for ripe bananas and brewing of alcohol or fermented juice.
- 20 This information was given by the respondents in Rukungiri District.
- 21 Response by one female respondent.
- 22 Case Number MKA 41/83, Kigezi Chief Magistrate's Court.
- 23 Case Number MKA 25/90, Kigezi Chief Magistrate's Court.
- 24 A World Bank Country Study (1993) *Uganda Agriculture*. Washington D.C, The World Bank.
- 25 See the Uganda Five Year Development Plans, right from the first one of 1961/62 - 1965/66. Entebbe: Government Printer.
- 26 Mahmood Mamdani, (1983) op. cit. p. 23.
- 27 See: Government Report: "Uganda - Policy Framework for 1988/89-1990/91" prepared in collaboration with the staff of International Monetary Fund and World Bank, October 1988.
- 28 Ibid, p. 23.
- 29 Op. cit, p. 142.
- 30 ibid.
- 31 Opio Odongo (1992) *Designs On Land: Agricultural Research in Uganda 1890-1990*. Nairobi: ACTS Press.
- 32 Kalengyere Research Station, Annual Report: "Africa Initiative Integrated Control of Potato Bacterial Wilt", August 1995-July 1996.
- 33 Interview with Kabale DAO, op. cit.
- 34 Batarirana, (1981) op. cit.
- 35 J. J. Batarirana, op. cit, p. 5-6. Also see: C.B. Bukkabeba, (1981) "Labour Requirements For The Production Of Beans, Sweet Potatoes And Sorghum In Kabale District". Faculty of Agriculture and Forestry: Makerere University. (Unpub.)
- 36 J. J. Batarirana, op. cit, p. 21.
- 37 Embihire is a variety of bananas grown for juice and alcohol brewing.
- 38 Kigezi District Annual Report, 1914-15 and Western Province Annual Report 1914-15. Also see Kigezi District Annual Reports of 1916-17; and 1920.
- 39 Report of the Department of Agriculture, Kabale, dated 15 February 1984.
- 40 The Kabale District Agricultural Officer, "Some Notes And Crop Production Figures, Kabale District 1985-86 Season".
- 41 Kabale District Administrator, 1993.
- 42 Civil Suit No. MKA 23/94, Kigezi Chief Magistrate's Court.
- 43 Civil Suit No. MKA 24/94, Kigezi Chief Magistrate's Court.
- 44 Civil Suit No. MKA 32/94.
- 45 The NGOs include UNFA, The World Vision, SWUADA, EDF and PAP.
- 46 Civil Suit No. MKA 14/96: Centenary Rural Development Bank Ltd. (Plaintiff) Versus G. Besiime (Defendant).