

Reimagining the Future Beyond Extractives:

A paper with and for the Ecofeminist movement in
Uganda to outline potential for transformative change

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Executive Summary



This paper exists to reimagine the future. It awakens us from the slumber of extractive development and heralds regenerative, climate just, and gender just feminist development alternatives. While recognising that the responsibility for making change should not lie on women alone — but on policy-makers and decision-makers, including corporates — it seeks to highlight ways that women can call for and be part of creating and sustaining an Ecofeminist movement. In this way, the paper helps women challenge extractivist, patriarchal norms and conditions and response to the ecological crises that so directly affect their lives.

This paper recommends that women strengthen and sustain an Ecofeminist movement in Uganda to challenge and replace existing extractive economic models with feminist alternatives. To support women to do this, it presents a number of further recommendations on areas such as:

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- Building community, cooperation and mutual care and making use of women's own stories within the Ecofeminist movement.
 - Reconceptualising women's everyday actions to resist patriarchal norms as acts of resistance within the movement.
 - Creating and championing women-only spaces.
 - Conducting further, non-extractive, gender-sensitive research to strengthen the movement.

It also calls on decision-makers to create and sustain an enabling political environment for women's activities within the Ecofeminist movement towards the ultimate goal of banning MNC (multinational corporations) extractives and moving towards agro-ecology as the framework for agriculture in Uganda.



POWER Project women beneficiaries from Nwoya District.

Photo Credit-Esther Ruth Mbabazi



Introduction



Extractives in Uganda

Uganda's extractives sector is rapidly transforming from small-scale and artisanal mining to large-scale industry in rural areas of the country. Extractives include oil, gas, and the accelerated licensing of mining operations as vast deposits of gold, uranium, copper, and rare earth minerals have been discovered. These operations are accompanied by mega 'infrastructure' investments – roads, pipelines, power lines, and dam projects – which serve the industry and displace local communities. Women bear the brunt of this.

Extractivism is defined as the large-scale extraction of raw materials such as oil, minerals, or industrial agricultural and monocultural products intended not for local consumption but for export, which entails many countries' integration into and dependency upon the capitalist world market.

In Uganda, the land rush has displaced communities to make space for intensive monocrops, oil exploration, and infrastructure projects. Government purchases land, often providing landowners with no choice and limited compensation, and then leases it to investors, including foreign companies. The economic ideology espoused by governments throughout Africa and beyond is that increased foreign direct investment will create a more developed and prosperous economy with jobs, wealth, improved social services for all, and better living conditions.


However, the reality for rural women is different. Governments become indebted and social security provision is not realised. State-subsidised investment in infrastructure for the extraction, transportation, and combustion of fossil fuels contributes to significant national debt. This is transferred to citizens through cuts to already starved public and social services. Much of the work done by women in affected areas, as elsewhere, is unpaid and undervalued by men, the government, and the private sector. This has a negative impact on women's income and wellbeing, creates an increase in unpaid care and domestic work, and contributes to violence against women.

Meanwhile, oil companies, government leadership, and the national and international elite turn a profit. According to women participants in the feminist school held in 2018, the Ugandan government has promised "middle income country status," but poverty is actually on the rise. The widening of the class-gap expanse is largely shouldered by women.

Affected communities have limited access to information and knowledge about laws and regulations on the extractives industry. Even when they do, their ability to access justice is limited. This is compounded by their exclusion from decision-making about activities that detrimentally affect their lives, but which enrich the local and ruling elite, corporate actors, and distant foreign investors. Land grabbing, insufficient regulations or implementation of the law, lack of compensation, and disputes between communities and companies cause grievances, loss of homes and livelihoods, and displacement – often with dire consequences.

Ugandan society is patriarchal. Women have positions in local governance structures, but they are generally seen to be mere figureheads with little voice or power. Many women's knowledge of their rights as embedded in the Constitution is limited and those with access to such knowledge face multiple barriers to accessing and realising them. Policies are not made democratically or driven by local development concerns.

For two years, women impacted by extractives have participated in a project called Participation and Opportunities for Women's Economic Rights (POWER), which aims to strengthen the Ecofeminist movement to promote and protect the economic rights of marginalised women



affected by compulsory land acquisition in four districts in Uganda: Nwoya, Amuru, Hoima, and Buliisa. The project was designed in response to the fact that 300,000 women have been displaced, and an additional one million women are at risk of displacement. POWER was funded by the UK Government through UK Aid Match.



Continental context

Women's subsistence economic activities in Africa have gone through significant transformations during the past decades due to structural changes in the organisation of global capital and state-capital relations in the extractive sector. This paper is a continuation of the work that the National Association of Professional Environmentalists (NAPE) and the National Association for Women's Action in Development (NAWAD), have undertaken under the POWER project, which is building an Ecofeminist Movement in Uganda with support from Womankind Worldwide (Womankind). The paper focuses on the extractives sector, and interrogates Ecofeminism as a potential framework for women's organising and movement strengthening within Uganda, mainly focusing on the mining system and industrial agriculture.

Extractivism refers to undertakings that strip off huge quantities of non-processed natural resources for export, though to some extent this can also be meant for local production (Acosta, 2017). This is largely tied to transnational capital, the state, and neoliberal agendas. Extractivism is a worldview that centres exploitation and material growth over both nature and people and is based on relationships of dominance and conquest over nature, in contradiction with stewardship (Klein, 2015). It can take forms of mining minerals, oil and gas extraction, quarrying, deforestation, and industrial agriculture. Such industrial, profit-driven economic activities cause severe ecological depletion. There is a strong relationship between this control of natural resources and the exploitation of women's labour through unpaid care work. Both processes benefit capitalist economies, with injustices normalised and invisibilised.

In this paper, the mining system refers to the specific historical configuration that grew from the interactions, concessions, and conflicts between global mining capital, the colonial powers, colonised polities, local labour (Hansen et al., 2016), and women's labour.

This paper considers Ecofeminism's orientation to a system anchored upon women's unpaid care work and the marginalisation of women's local knowledge systems and subsistence economies. It outlines recommendations for the strengthening of an Ecofeminist movement in Uganda and across Africa in opposition to the extractives sector. In addition, this paper envisions what African Ecofeminism could look like. We consider how indigenous women's knowledge can be harnessed and feminist knowledge produced within a framework that honours and respects women's experiences and realities within the extractives sector. Colonial systems that led to the growth of expansionist capitalism and western development models marginalise local knowledge systems and destroy subsistence economies. This growth-oriented development model is the source of women's oppression and current marginalised position in society.



Objectives of the paper

This paper seeks to strengthen the knowledge and evidence base for women in Uganda affected by extractivism and give them tools to advance and sustain an Ecofeminist movement. It touches upon the current context and analysis of the existence and impact of extractive industries in Uganda tied to government collaboration and foreign direct investment; the emergence, action, and achievements of the Ecofeminist movement within Uganda in response to lack of sufficient consent and compensation processes for women; an exploration of alternatives to extractives in Uganda; and consideration of opportunities for the Ecofeminist movement to influence Ugandan government policy and practice including through regional and international processes and spaces. The paper reimagines the future and the potential for subverting the current extractivist model. We will draw on case studies within Africa that show another way is possible, that feminist alternatives are already underway.

In the words of POWER participant Owek Jennifer,

“Women should be the ones involved in large-scale agroecology farming. We now understand it is not about men and big business only, but about a participatory economic system that serves us, the majority land-tillers.”



Research methodology

In addition to its aims of developing women’s knowledge and tools to participate in and strengthen the Ecofeminist movement, this paper is also intended to support the growth of a qualitative research design to guide research participants in the data collection process. The methodology centres non-maleficence, beneficence, autonomy, justice, confidentiality, privacy, veracity, safety, and fidelity. Data was collected through key informant interviews and analysis of existing literature and data. This paper builds upon the work that has been carried out through the POWER project. The paper deployed feminist participatory methodologies that centre feminist political education and movement building.

Sampling

This research paper uses purposive sampling, also referred to as judgemental or researcher’s choice sampling, which makes use of researcher’s personal judgement to select subjects that are regarded as representative of the population. Purposive sampling was used to identify women for four key informant interviews (KIIs).

Snowballing

Snowball sampling is a sampling method used by researchers to generate a pool of participants for a research study through referrals made by individuals who share a particular characteristic of research interest with the target population. In snowball sampling, a subject from an initial sample group is asked by researchers to recommend individuals to act as future participants. The prompting for recommendations may take the form of an informal question, such as “Who are your best friends?” The subjects who are recommended by these individuals and agree to participate in the research are then considered to be the first wave of participants.

Key Informant Interviews (KIIs)

KIIs were used in this study to solicit data through oral questioning. This qualitative data collection technique involved conducting intensive individual questioning to bring out in-depth understanding of women’s experiences and get a clear picture of women’s perspectives on the extractives sector. Semi-structured questions were used during the interviewing process and an interview guide was used. Follow up questions on the responses given were used to collect data. During interviews, the researcher was able to elicit information on individual experiences, opinions, and feelings.

Document Analysis

Document analysis is the other qualitative research instrument used. Documents were interpreted by the researcher to confer voice and meaning on topics covered in this research. Like other analytical methods used in qualitative research, document analysis requires that data be examined and interpreted in order to elicit meaning, gain understanding, and develop empirical knowledge.



Ongoing colonial extractivism and its impact on African women



Colonialism and the extractives sector


The primary goal of colonial conquest was to extract raw materials for western markets and production processes (Laterza and Sharp, 2017). Natural resources from Africa aided the growth of capitalism and led to the taking over of indigenous lands and territories.

Economies in Africa have experienced the development of artisanal mining, which usually takes place alongside large-scale mining. Artisanal mining is the extraction of minerals – mostly alluvial deposits that have been deposited on the surface through a process of weathering. The extraction process involves digging and sifting through mud, sand, and/or gravel using shovels, sieves, or even bare hands. The impacts of colonial policies on Uganda's post-colonial development pathway continue to model its present-day socio-political and economic systems. Colonialism has exerted an overbearing weight on contemporary African realities and continues to determine the development agenda of post-colonial states (Ahluwalia 2012). When the establishment of colonies happened, colonial policies suddenly shifted from the traditional subsistence economies in Uganda to 'modern' and commercial production. The expansion of colonial control over indigenous territories in Uganda was primarily motivated by the quest to take over and control new territories for natural resources and power.



History of extraction in Uganda

The extraction of iron and salt in Uganda has been in existence since before the colonial period. Artisanal and small-scale mining of gold is a relatively recent phenomenon that can be traced back to the colonial gold and tin mining in southwestern Uganda in the 1920s and 1950s, resulting in the migration of other tribes into these mining areas (Saferworld, 2017). Nationals from other African countries such as the Democratic Republic of Congo and Rwanda also populated the established mining towns, searching for alternative livelihoods as their lands and territories had been invaded by the colonial administration.



Large-scale industrial mining was established between the 1950s and the 1970s, such as the Kilembe Mine, which produced blister copper and cobalt. Minerals contributed a third of the country's gross domestic product (GDP), with cotton and coffee surpassing minerals at 35% of Uganda's foreign export earnings. The country's 1964 Constitution criminalised the mining of gold and diamonds, but this did not stop the extraction of the minerals, as gold continued to be mined in the region. Civil and political unrest during the Idi Amin regime between 1971 and 1979 resulted in the collapse of the Uganda mining sector. From 1986 when the Yoweri Museveni administration came to power, formal gold mining resumed through a presidential decree that made licensing possible. During the 1980s, artisanal miners' gold discoveries resulted in gold rushes across the country. Small-scale mining was reintroduced within farming and pastoralist communities (Baretto *et al.*, 2018)



Steps in the extraction process

One of the reasons extraction of mineral resources is of concern to women, particularly farming and indigenous women, is that mining has devastating impacts on their bodies and wellbeing – for example, due to the ill effects of working with dangerous chemicals. The process of extracting minerals from the ground includes exploration or prospecting, carrying out feasibility studies, land clearing and construction, extraction, and reclamation. These activities affect women by causing them to have miscarriages; develop skin diseases due to chemical exposures; and experience uterus complications, asthmatic, and breathing problems, among others. Environmental risks often receive peripheral attention, especially in countries with weak environmental laws and enforcement (Woldendorp *et al.*, 2013).

“The Mining Act of 2003 is silent on activities of artisanal miners and the chemicals used that corrode skin, cause headaches, and bring body weakness. We didn't know it's a result of bodily absorption of mercury,” – Sande, participant (NAPE publication 2020).

If a mining project is viable, the company may start clearing the land to construct mine structures, including the processing plant (Coulson 2012). Clearing the land involves cutting down trees and destroying plant and animal life to pave the way for building. In most countries, before mining starts, companies need to carry out an Environmental Impact Assessment (Rabie *et al.*, 1993).

After mining has taken place, the final stage is reclamation, which involves rehabilitation of the land. This implies that the miner is supposed to ensure that the land is suitable for future use (Lynch, 2004). In some countries, governments hold mining companies accountable by requiring them to pay a reclamation bond held by the company until it meets all environmental standards on closing down the company and remediates the mine site (Rabie *et al.*, 1993). This gives protection against “fly-by-night” companies.



The plight of women in informal mining


Women participating in mining across the whole continent have remained largely invisible and marginalised (Eftimie *et al.*, 2012). Those in artisanal and small-scale mining often carry out their activities under unsafe and unhealthy conditions. They do so because it results in significant rises in household income levels (Women and Law in Southern Africa (WLSA), 2012). WLSA (2012) notes that women carrying out artisanal gold mining face the same challenges as those in the formal mining sector. As shown in NAPE's report: mercury free gold mining in Uganda 2020, women workers generally have low knowledge on the current regulatory frameworks. They face harassment, bullying, and corrupt work practices at the hands of unscrupulous buyers and male miners.

The involvement of women in mining varies according to areas of operation, culture, type of mineral and other socio-economic factors that include poverty levels (ILO, 1999). Women often participate more in informal mining due to the cumbersome processes involved in registering their operations, forcing them to remain informal and unregistered. Some studies across Africa indicate that women in artisanal mining are severely disadvantaged and depend on those more powerful through ties of affinity, kinship, and patronage. This multiplicity of challenges is often exacerbated by domestic violence, transformation in marriages as gender roles shift due to women's participation in productive work outside of the household sphere, and diseases associated with the artisanal mining sector (Ofei-Aboagye, 2001).



Photo Credit-NAPE

Image above: Woman mining gold in karamoja in northern Uganda.




As stated previously, most women in the mining sector work informally. This has resulted in the social exclusion of women trying to earn from this subsistence activity. Social exclusion is “a process and a state that prevents individuals or groups from full participation in social, economic and political life and asserting their rights, and it derives from exclusionary relationships” (Beall and Piron, 2005:8). The social exclusion of women participating in artisanal mining can be attributed largely to entrenched patriarchy and, in some cases, to the continuous criminalisation of their activities (Hilson and Potter, 2003). Criminalisation of artisanal mining often takes place on land that is not licensed or regulated for mining activities. Due to the very nature of this mining, it has little or no regard for the environmental impacts or associated impacts on biodiversity and future agricultural land use. Artisanal mining is often poverty driven. The Mining, Minerals and Sustainable Development Project (MMSD) (2002), however, attributes the criminalisation of artisanal miners in general to the need for expansion by large corporations and the Governments’ deliberate preference for large-scale mining. However, the entry of large investors in the mining sector often results in involuntary displacements of the local communities and the subsequent loss of land and livelihoods for most farming and indigenous women. This means that the women may be left with no option but to diversify their livelihoods and venture into informal ASM. Women often face arrest in ASM because they largely do not have the formal and informal ties with the regulatory authorities, the licensing process is bureaucratic, and the language and format of the documentation is inaccessible to the majority. Women end up operating without the required licensing and documentation because the policies and regulatory frameworks are blind to women’s realities.

Women from the four districts that the POWER project engaged with are determined to understand and protect their land rights and guard against land and other resource grabs. Land is central to women’s livelihoods and wellbeing.

Those who venture into artisanal mining often have to put themselves at the intersection of physical and structural violence. Structural violence is a violence that results in harm but is not caused by a clearly identifiable actor as it is entrenched in the whole system, and emanates from political and economic deprivation of a group of people who in this case are women. Exclusion of women from the management of natural resources is a form of violence that has been normalised by laws, social norms, and beliefs. Often when women stand up to question this form of violence or fight for their space in the control and governance of resources at household, community, or national levels, they are met with condemnation and are attacked physically and emotionally. In order to adequately understand structural violence, there is a need to further interrogate why personal violence amongst different genders, sexes, and races exist.

This violence that women face in the mining sector and within the whole extractives driven development model can only be understood through the interconnectedness of the web of injustices and deprivation. When women are denied access to land, their lives and wellbeing are negatively impacted. Their existence is threatened by hunger, poverty, and destitution. This explains why women throughout the world occupy the frontlines of resistance in defending their lands and territories.



Most of the Ugandan women engaged in the POWER project come from the oil fields of Hoima and have experienced exclusion from decision-making processes involving land, which is their primary source of livelihood.



“I do not know how life has been before the coming in of the oil companies because I was young. I also do not understand life during the colonial period because I was not born yet, but what I know now is that women are not involved in the negotiations for land. We are just told that the government has decided to take over the land and use it for other purposes. The men give permission and allow the government to take over our territories without our consent. It is not right to just wake up one day and realise that you are now destitute and have no land for agriculture.” –Joan Tumusiime, POWER project participant.

Women are not concerned about being involved in oil extraction, but they are worried about not having land for food production and not being involved in decisions regarding land. This exclusion constitutes structural violence against Ugandan women as a social class. Whilst it can be argued that this can be traced back from the country’s colonial history – which is of interest to Ecofeminist and African thought – POWER women attribute this to some cultural practices that push women to the periphery in decision-making processes. Their exclusion leaves women with no citizens’ rights and deprioritises them as a collective. The structural features of capitalism, classism, and patriarchy continue to exist because they are perfected and normalised by the economic, social, and cultural systems. The role associated with women living in the resource rich areas is mostly customary to their role within the household, which accompanies them to their public life. This power imbalance can only be challenged through having more women participating in the public arena and working against the structural dynamics promoting inequality. The exclusion of women and grabbing of their farmlands without consent further perpetuates their alienation.



The violence of western development on African women

The aim of colonisation, which Ocheni and Nkwanko (2012) define as the absolute and overall control of one country by another based on state power being in the hands of external power, was not intended to benefit the African indigenes. This understanding of the intentions of colonialism offers a foundation to understand who the mineral resources in Africa were intended to benefit. The colonisation of Africa was made necessary by a number of factors. Among others was the onset of the industrial revolution which resulted in the rapid growth of technology and the socio-economic transformation of Europe. This resulted in an increase in production, but this development in the industry grew more rapidly than the advancement in agriculture, leading to shortages in raw materials for European production, necessitating the British, for example, to seek additional raw materials beyond their borders as agricultural production went down and demand for industrial raw materials soared (Ocheni and Nkwanko, 2012). Decreased agricultural production in Europe also threatened the food security of the region, as it was becoming increasingly difficult to feed the growing urban population. The situation threatened the security and stability of Europe.

Due to the rapid growth in technology, new products were manufactured quicker than what the population could consume, therefore creating a need for products to be disposed of elsewhere. Africa and other Global South countries became a target for disposing of surplus. Africa offered a ready market for European products. Not only was Africa going to be a good dumping site for Europe's excesses, but it also would become a source of cheap labour. As a result of the low wages paid to African workers, there was an excessive accumulation of profits by colonial industrialists. In fact, profits accumulated at a much faster rate than they could reinvest (Ocheni and Nkwanko, 2012). This under-utilisation of capital resulted in the creation of new ideas about how such capital should be moved and reinvested for the production of new products. Chinweizu (cited in Ocheni and Nkwanko, 2012) states that it is the process of reinvestment of surplus capital that gave rise to imperialism and colonialism. It is within this context that the analysis of the extractives sector in Uganda should be located.


The need for the growth of capital pioneered industrial capitalism, which led to the demands for raw materials and cheap labour.

The economic salvation of Africa is often considered to be located in its vast natural resources, but for the resources to drive the continent's development, there is a need for capital, technologies, expertise, and access to the extractive markets through multinational corporations (MNCs). Over the past decade, Africa has experienced a huge outpouring of extractive Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) by the MNCs. 60% of all the greenfield investments in Africa has been facilitated by the extraction of natural resources, and 75% of all FDI in Africa was directed to natural resource-rich countries (AfDB, 2013). A greenfield investment is an FDI whereby a parent company initiates a subsidiary company in another jurisdiction, constructing its operations from scratch going up. The new production facilities may include the creation of new distribution centres, offices, and other infrastructure. This FDI is touted as offering massive development opportunities, generating revenue for the government, increasing exports, creating jobs, and offering opportunities for economic growth through the trickle-down effect (Jourdan, 2008). Through fostering such linkages, the MNCs in the extractives sector often fail to live up to expectations.

There is an expectation that the FDI in the extractives will provide benefits for host countries through taxes, royalties, and licences. Some governments are putting in place local content policies, laws, and concessions, which can be either mandatory or voluntary measures to ensure that FDI can facilitate social and economic development. However, governments in Africa are finding it challenging to promote local content.



Image above: Annet Atuhaire from Katokye listener's club standing in front of Lake Albert.



One of the reasons that Africa has failed to realise development from its vast mineral resources is capital flight, referred to as Illicit Financial Flows (IFFs). It becomes necessary to understand Africa's historical context when exploring Illicit Financial Flows and the role of women in the value chain of capital flights from Africa. IFFs are regarded as the illegal movements of capital across borders where the illegally acquired money is transferred across international borders through cartels based on trade-based money laundering methods; trade misinvoicing aimed at evading customs duty and taxes; traffickers carrying money out of a country illegally or depositing it in a foreign bank; and terrorist groups wiring money from one region to another operative in another country.¹ This definition suggests that IFFs involve criminal activity. Transfer of the money is in contravention to national or international laws and circumvents tax laws, public policy, and financial services regulation.² Through IFFs, MNCs avoid paying taxes, and particularly mining corporations connive with political elites for tax holidays at the expense of the development of a country and access to public services and social protection services. Such descriptions of IFFs may imply that the instances of capital flight during the colonial periods in Africa were legal and should not be considered IFFs. International laws facilitated the colonisation of Africa, and the same laws have continued to occupy a predominant role in African realities (Gassama, (2018) attempting to justify the violent, exploitative relationships between women and men, between Africa and the Global North, and the continued extraction of natural resources in the African continent at Africans' expense.




The case of Uganda's resources

Uganda has mineral resources which include unexploited copper and cobalt reserves and oil that has been under exploration since 2006 (Department of Geological Surveys, 2015). Approximately 3.5 billion barrels was upgraded in 2014 to an estimated 6.5 billion barrels, of which 1.4 billion are expected to be recoverable (*The Independent*, 2014). Oil reservoirs in western Uganda, mainly under Lake Albert, are expected to realise up to 2 billion dollars per year at their peak, and to last for at least 15–20 years starting from 2018 (Shepherd, 2013). The government of Uganda signed production-sharing agreements with Chinese CNOOC, French Total, and British Tullow, which were expected to commence pumping the first oil in 2018. The three corporations carried out exploration on 88 oil drilling sites, and 76 of them showed indications of having oil. The overall picture shows that the investments in the oil sector exploration should be worth about 1.7 billion US dollars between 1998 and 2013 (*Wall Street Journal*, 2013). An announcement was made in September 2013 that CNOOC had succeeded in getting a USD 2 billion license for oil production in Uganda's Kingfisher Bay.

Uganda recently put in place local content policies. The country's national development plan expresses the desire to make use of oil revenue to promote economic diversification, technological advancement, and national development. The government is emphasising local content provisions and the policy frameworks to support that. The local content policy framework was informed by the National Oil and Gas policy of 2008, which is consistent with the government of Uganda's principal goal, Vision 2040, to utilise Uganda's oil resources to alleviate poverty and stimulate the country's socio-economic transformation. The same principle goal also speaks to the need to ensure national involvement in oil and gas activities and to empower Ugandan citizens with the necessary skills to take part in the oil investments. This policy consists of a number of bills, laws, and acts. The most significant bill for local content is the Petroleum Exploration, Development and Production Bill (2012), where there are no requirements for mandatory linkages or

1 <https://gfintegrity.org/issue/illicit-financial-flows/>

2 https://www.un.org/esa/ffd/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/Illicit-financial-flows-conceptual-paper_FfDO-working-paper.pdf



provisions for local content percentages. There exist, however, some requirements which have been put in place to support local content. There is a requirement, for instance, that applicants who are awarded licences should come up with plans for local employment creation and training. In addition, there is a need for proposals for the procurement of goods and services to be done within Uganda (the Republic of Uganda, 2012).


However, Uganda continues to face challenges because of its weak local capacity. While there is growth in the manufacturing sector, the sector is characterised primarily by informal small businesses with few workers and limited technology. There are also challenges of perception. Other players with the requisite expertise in the oil sector have the opinion that there is limited local capacity in Uganda, resulting in difficulties in the implementation of the specific obligations of the local content. Uganda's Petroleum Department commissioned a report whose estimations indicate that the share of total FDI in the petroleum sector that Uganda retains (which can be expended for local content) is around 14 per cent (the Republic of Uganda, 2011). This implies that local inputs are provided by foreign corporations and service providers. So far, there are a few positive initiatives that are promoting local capacity or transforming the economy (Kjær and Katusiimeh, 2012). The country's infrastructure has largely remained extremely inadequate, and the problems that the emerging oil industry is faced with are on the implementation side, particularly with regard to the huge gap between the foreign corporations' demand and local businesses' supply (Shepherd, 2013). Ecofeminism asserts that the extractives sector does not bring any economic prosperity but impoverishes the host countries in the Global South.

The debate on the imagined benefits of the extractives sector is not new but dates back to the colonial era, where Arrighi (1973) observes that the proletarianisation of African farming created contradictions for the colonial accumulation system. Wages were kept so low that farming families, particularly women, could assume the workers' reproduction costs. African women aided the flight of Africa's resources through subsidising capital accumulation through their unpaid household and care work. Estimations of how much has been lost in Africa during the colonial period as a result of capital flight is difficult to assess in purely monetary terms, but what is evident is the impoverishment of the continent and the conditions of the majority of African women who continue to live on the margins of society without adequate social services. The case of Uganda shows how capital is still flying out of the continent, and farming and indigenous women continue to carry the extra burden of capital flight through their unpaid care work and the household burden.

Women in Uganda, as in other parts of Africa, do not have an idea of who the investor exploiting natural resources in their area is. Consultation is done through governments who seem to have complicated relationships with their communities but sound relationships with investors.



“The government officials came to our community and told us that they needed our consent to take land since it has to be used for development purposes. We decided to withhold our consent since they did not tell us anything about compensation. The government officials then came back and told us that the land does not belong to us in the first place but belongs to another tribe who we had not seen in our area before. They went on to say that the other tribe that ‘owns’ the land had given consent for the project to go ahead. This has caused conflicts in our land as we are questioning the reasons behind the consent that the government received from people that are not residing in that area. I was born in this area and I have always known the land to belong to us.” – Fabis, POWER participant.



Research participants indicated that they are not aware of who the government was representing during the consultation process. The women consider the way that the consent was obtained to be fraudulent since they think that the alleged owners of the land are non-existent, and that the government is motivated by corruption. The government has an obligation to protect its citizens but, in this case, the government is taking the side of the investors. The women, and the community in general, do not have complete information about the project to enable them to make a decision or offer their consent. There is no transparency in the contract negotiations between the government and the investors. The terms of the contract are kept in total secrecy, yet the natural resources are on the land that is occupied by people who have claims over the land. The government should represent the people and act in the best interest of the people, but research participants state that the government is in no way representing their interests. The women are not aware of the proceeds coming from the extraction of the country's natural resources, yet they had been custodians of these resources since time immemorial.



Free, prior and informed, continued consent and compensation (FPICCC)

Petroleum extraction is quickly growing in the west and north of Uganda. 84 percent of Uganda's population is rural, but little attention is given to the needs of those likely to be displaced due to expanding industry. The World Bank has endorsed "free prior and informed consent" (FPIC) as a means of assuring that extraction projects contribute to poverty alleviation and minimise damage. However, rigorous FPIC principles are rarely applied in practice.

Globally, many communities under threat have focused on their right to free, prior and informed consent, as enshrined in international law and defined most clearly in the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People. ("United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People," United Nations, 2008). In response to the lack of a formalised system of compensation, the Ugandan government published its Guidelines for Compensation Assessment Under Land Acquisition in June 2017. ("Guidelines for Compensation Assessment Under Land Acquisition", Ministry of Lands, Housing, and Urban Development, 2017). These guidelines primarily focus on ways to assess appropriate compensation levels. Despite recognising the complexity of Uganda's land management in Principle 8 of the document, no mention is made of the gender inequality issues in awarding compensation.

Additionally, the material conditions under which consent is given is quite critical. It is important that consent is given freely without coercion and use of undue influence, implying that consent should be free, prior informed, and continuous. Women should be given the right to withdraw or withhold their consent, and these should be the conditions under which that consent is sought. Consent must be seen as can be withdrawn anytime when a resource host or impacted woman is not satisfied with the compensation package or its procedures.



“We allowed the sugar-cane plantations to take part of our land because we realise the need to share the land. We had excess land that we felt that we should allow the plantation to take and carry out their industrial project.” – Adokorach Monica, POWER participant.

This consent raises a number of challenges when coming from a woman who initially mentioned that the land is their wealth and their heritage, which they are supposed to pass on to the next generation. She then goes on to state that she felt that she had to pass on the land to some investor in industrial sugar-cane production. The consent was given within a context where power is visible, invisible, and concealed in the structures that normalise the oppressive practices, beliefs, and values that marginalise and infantilise women.

How do the power relations between women, the government, and investors affect the consent process? How do we consciously listen for silences and absence in the consent processes?

If the government and the investors are committed to FPICCC, then they should be able to listen for boundaries, marginalisations, and silences. They should interrogate their relationship and power differentials with the women involved in the process of giving or withholding their consent. It is important for any consent process to analyse each participant’s own situatedness. The neoliberal thinking which states that the law does not protect against poor bargainers is often used to take advantage of women. It is important to centre feminist thinking around consent in order to allow for the analysis of how the government and investors’ basket of experiences privileges them, even more so, if they are male. There is need to call on negotiators within the extractives sector to be committed to self-reflection so that they can reflect on how their identities influence the process. They should reflect on the existing power dynamics in the contexts in which the FPICCC processes (re)produce power dynamics.



“The land is a form of our identity, it gives us a sense of belonging. Sometimes this is all that we know, so when we lose it, we can find ourselves as refugees or squatters in our own land with no place to go. We can lose our livelihoods and source of food, water, and wealth. The land is a source of our pride and dignity.” – Group 1 of a POWER project advocacy training.

That women gave consent to have their land taken, yet lament the loss of the same land, points to contradictions within consent and compensation processes. How were the women represented in the consultation processes with regards to consent? How were the women described and characterised in the processes? These questions take us to the shared Feminist Theoretical framework that should inform practice.

Feminisms and the ecological crisis


Ecofeminism suggests a new world order which challenges today's mainstream notions of what nature is and society's commonly held notions about what it means to be human. (Warren, 2000). Ecofeminism, sometimes referred to as Ecological feminism, analyses the power structures, social classifications, and boundaries concerning the social and natural debates. Within the POWER project, we understand Ecofeminism to be a movement for women to have a say on the protection of the environment, energy, and climate justice issues in addition to agribusiness and extractive industries.



Photo credit-Esther Ruth Mbabazi

Image above: Members of Lancan Kwite women's group in Nwoya district.

Before venturing further into what Ecofeminism is, there is a need to understand the origins of feminism, as it is often considered a western ideology. Feminist Theory emerged in the 1790s after Mary Wollstonecraft's "A Vindication of the Rights of Women" and Sojourner Truth's "Ain't I a Woman," among other publications. Feminist Theory is founded on interrogating gender inequality with the inclusion of analysis of such concepts as discrimination, sexual objectification, oppression, patriarchy, and stereotyping (Gillian, 1977).



Bringing feminist lenses to the interrogation of the intersection of gender justice and environmental justice is necessary to underscore the differences in access to the benefits of extractives. Though Feminist Theory can give explanations on discrimination in the distribution of resources and patriarchy as a system that operates globally, it cannot be denied that it has its origin in Europe (Cott, 1987), which has often led to its lack of legitimacy when applying it to non-European contexts. Furthermore, due to Africa's colonial history, the voices of Black African women are often missing in Feminist Theories and writings. Influential African Ecofeminists such as Wangari Maathai, the existence of the African Feminist Charter since 2006, and various national feminist forums including the Uganda Feminist Forum are all evidence that feminism has been understood and told through African perspectives.

Feminist Theory creates knowledge on women's bodies and subverts historically male epistemological standpoints on this (Kisitu and Siwila, 2016). Classical philosophers like Plato and Aristotle, whose writings remain influential in academia today, gave women inferior statuses while positioning male bodies as depositories of superior souls, which were supposedly better positioned for leadership, state protection, and knowledge (Buchan, 1999). Thus, women have long been excluded from leadership and decision-making. This may explain the invisibility of women in the mining sector across Africa and in the decision-making processes regarding countries' mineral wealth. This justifies the application of Feminist Theory in Africa, where women participating in the extractives sector are perpetually debunking the myth of the "weak" woman who is "unable" to cope with life's stresses.



Feminist concern over the exclusion of women

Feminist theorist De Beauvoir (1949) blames the exclusion of women on what she refers to as the "othering" of women. De Beauvoir offers an existentialist dimension to Feminist Theory by asking the question of what a woman is. A woman is always considered the other and differentiated according to the man and not in her own capacity (De Beauvoir, 1949). Thus, the needs, aspirations, and even narratives are seen with reference to the male. This has obvious implications for development priorities. Needs of women are pushed to the periphery through the process of "othering," as defined by De Beauvoir. In Uganda, mining revenue, whether in formal or informal operations, is regarded as essential for the development of the country, and men are the ones majorly involved in mainstream and formal mining processes, with women largely being confined to social reproduction roles.



Feminism and women in mining

Liberal democracies like Australia and Canada often assume that women should be recognised as a distinct group who are not treated equally in employment prospects in the mining industry (Women in Mining Canada, 2010). This exists within a much broader acceptance of the discriminatory inequalities of access experienced by women in the workplace and beyond. In mining particularly, it has been the inspiration for the growth and progression of a well-defined Women in Mining (WIM) movement that has been active in the sector since the mid-1990s. WIM has representation at the national level through organisations like WIM Canada and WIM South Africa. There are also WIM networks and chapters in the districts and provinces within countries where WIM has a presence. At the international level, the International Women in Mining Organisation represents the interests of WIM. (However, it should be noted that there is no formal link between the different groups and that there is no single manifesto that defines the movement they represent.)

The term movement is used to describe the work that is being carried out to secure equal opportunities in the mining sector for women through the WIM with the full realisation that WIM does not necessarily appear to be a progressive counter-culture movement. Most of the WIM organisations are financially supported by the same mining corporations that are requested to absorb more women into their systems. WIM is not a radical or intersectional feminist movement. Instead, it appears as a conspicuously liberal feminist movement placing particular importance on discussions of gender equality in the mining sector in neoliberal, democratic societies. However, the Ecofeminist movement and WIM do share a common broad analysis of how the mining sector discriminates against women, both in terms of employment access and in terms of disproportionately negative impacts to their lived realities.



Photo Credit-NAPE

Image above: A woman with disability from Amuru District.

Women are not a homogenous group but carry different identities as informed by their ages, socio-economic backgrounds, beliefs and convictions, (dis)abilities, experiences, and realities. The women that were involved in this study did not desire to be employed in the mines or to occupy positions where they have power over other individuals and groups. The women in this study are defenders of their land and territories and therefore may not be affiliated to WIM, as they hold different feminist politics and have different aspirations. The politics that women in this study hold do not seek to create hierarchies amongst women but rather question the gender biases in individualistic approaches to development.



“We should always come together as women and learn from each other. We should support each other as women so that we can fight the injustice and exclusion we are facing every day.” —

Akech, POWER participant.

Akech's statement speaks to values informed impassioned consideration for other women in the same situation. This provides a starting point for reimagining the future that women are envisioning. Women are placing priority on the collective, as opposed to the individual. Her approach points to relationships that are constructed based on mutual care. The women are committed to the flourishing of individuals whilst acknowledging their interdependence. This is central to Ecofeminist thinking.

Through the POWER project, we have witnessed grassroots women from across the four project districts of Hoima, Buliisa, Nwoya, and Amuru coming together in varying sized groups – both formal and informal – to collectively address issues of rights violations. In Hoima they gathered in November 2020 to peacefully protest against Hoima Sugar Limited through the Save Bugoma Forest campaign. In March 2021 they organised a bicycle caravan to hand over a petition on women's land rights to a parliamentarian in Buliisa, and in September 2021, they gathered in Amuru to petition against land grabs by West Acholi Cooperative Union (WACU). In between these larger acts of advocacy, women have been coming together at village and sub-county levels to tackle injustices.




Photo Credit-NAPE

Image above: Women protest bugoma land give away in the albertine graben of Uganda.



“We are 58 members in the group. 10 of us were trained by POWER project, and we shared our knowledge with other group members. As a group, we helped a single mother who was being violated by a rich man. The single mother bought land, built a home in it, and planted fruit trees to support her household with food and income generation. A wealthy man came and ploughed down all her fruit trees. The group reported the matter to the Rwot Kweri [cultural leader] of the area who did nothing. So, as a group, they confronted the man themselves. At first the man responded to them with threats of arrest. The group challenged the man, saying, ‘The Police are human just as we are; if we go with the truth to them, they cannot arrest us.’ The wealthy man, realising that the women were firm in their confrontation, negotiated with them. He replanted all the fruit trees and signed off an agreement with the Rwot Kweri.”

— Lubanga Twero Women's group, Nwoya District.



POWER project women advocate for holistic protection of their land. Mining takes place on the land and therefore creates conflicts between beneficiaries of the mining operations and the women who depend on the same land for their sustenance. POWER project research participants noted they would prefer to bequeath their land to future generations.

Here arises the question of whether WIM or any other groups actively participating in the mining sector can fit within Ecofeminist frameworks. Ling (2014) asserts that the development of Ecofeminist Theory is closely related to the ecological crisis that has been caused by modernisation and industrial civilisation. As the world continues to modernise, the demand for energy and resources escalates. The amount of industrial waste and emissions from production processes causes additional environmental harm. Most emissions are attributed to the extractives sector, and to burning fossil fuels. Two-thirds of global emissions come from the energy sector, with coal-fired power plants being responsible for the largest amount of emissions (International Energy Agency, 2019). Most energy generated is not intended for common people but rather to drive the extractives sector, especially mining. As the ecosystem depletes, its ecological capacity is strained, resulting in an ecological crisis (Ling, 2014). This ecological crisis disproportionately affects women living in the rural areas as their livelihoods are dependent on local ecology. The mining sector should discern how production of minerals can avoid disproportionately harming women. The social, economic, and health burdens faced by the frontline communities should be remedied at the cost of MNCs.

Evidence from POWER project has shown that women act differently when sensitised on their rights and the legal frameworks which uphold those rights. They are then able to push against disproportionate state and corporate power. This awareness helps them resist exaggerated promises and coercion into negative peace.



Ecofeminism and the ecological crisis

While the feminist movement called on the emancipation of women, the environmental justice movement called for the protection of nature. Ecofeminism brings together the goals of the two movements (Guan, 1996). Consumption has increased dramatically in our global economy, and the demand for mineral resources and energy has also increased. As production is intensifying, waste has also intensified (Ling, 2014). This has resulted in an ecological crisis as the relationship between humanity and nature has been strained. Women in rural areas, farming women, and indigenous groups who depend on land for their productive activities such as fetching water and firewood must depend on the health of their natural ecosystems for survival. As much as energy poverty is a women's rights issue, the production and generation of energy from fossil fuels poses an environmental threat.

Ecofeminism assumes that rural women cannot be blamed for environmental degradation. According to Ehrenreich (2014), the responsibility of the government is to intervene on behalf of the marginalised and deprived. It is the role of the government to make sure that the depletion of forests is avoided by creating and implementing a policy framework that guides the operations of the extractives industry and protects

the environment and indigenes whose lives depend on the land. It should not be the case that rural women take greater action to restore ecology than the governments that permit environmental degradation using these women's taxes.

Ecofeminism's focus on environmental protection seems to contradict, to some extent, the participation of women in the extractives sector, as it places women at the centre of environmental protection, as defenders of territories and land. However, the women that participate in the mining sector are not a homogenous group. Some women participate at the subsistence level and others as workers for big business. A few own their own mining operations. Does Ecofeminism speak to any of the women participating in mining, or is it strictly a movement for land defenders?

Ecofeminism states that there is no single category for women. Theories that reduce women to a monolithic block exclude the worldviews and experiences of most women. Ecofeminism embraces intersectional analysis to understand the diverse experiences of women – including those who have experienced sexism, classism, racism, ageism, ableism, and homophobia. Without an intersectional analysis, we are blind to the multiple exclusions that most women experience. Intersectional analysis enables ecofeminists to explore the varied and complex ways that environmental devastation impacts women.



Image above: A member of Kyakaboga resettlement camp in Hoima district.



Ecofeminism and the dominant development model


Ecofeminism acknowledges that western civilisation has brought with it the subjugation and domination of both women and nature. Rural and indigenous women are dependent on the natural environment for their livelihoods and survival, and the destruction of nature disproportionately affects them. This paper, however, does not naturalise the connection between women and nature but agrees with Mies and Shiva (1993) that the Ecofeminist perspective draws its assumptions from the fundamental necessities of life. This is known as the subsistence perspective. Women in the Global South who live and work on the land and struggle for their immediate survival are nearer to nature than middle-class men and women in the Global North (Mies and Shiva, 1993). This paper is based on the same thinking that farming women are nearer to the subsistence perspective than middle-class women and men living in urban settings in Uganda and anywhere else in and beyond Africa.

Ecofeminist Political Theory emerged within an international context where the world responded to ecological crisis through increased militarism and nationalism, straining transnational relations (Ling, 2014). The ecological crisis is, in essence, a crisis of humans; as industrial society grows, male family members are leaving their families to join the formal workforce while women — as food producers, caregivers, and family educators — carry traditional social tasks in managing natural resources and food security. This social division of labour places women at the centre of the ecological crisis, where they suffer more harm. This is more evident in developing world countries (Fang & Luo, 2009). The indigenous and farming women who live in rural areas work as food producers who supply their labour by working as unpaid family workers. A considerable amount of their time is spent on agricultural activities and consumed by domestic work. The Food and Agriculture Organisation (2019) asserts that women living in rural areas work for between 16-18 hours per day within their households and sometimes in industrial agriculture.


Ecofeminism and industrial agriculture

Industrial agriculture destroys soil fertility and brings harm to the bodies and minds of women (Ling, 2014). Meagre harvests brought about by degraded environments and the residual chemicals from industrial agriculture cause great harm to women, impacting the normal functions of social reproduction and putting a strain on the process of social development.

There has been a lot of excitement about the possibility of commercial agriculture empowering the poorest communities in Uganda through increased productivity and higher incomes (International Fund for Agricultural Development 2001). Unfortunately, the results of commercial projects like sugarcane farming in Uganda have been detrimental to the local people (Isaacman 1990). Since it is one of the main economic activities in the country, sugarcane farming was expected to provide opportunities for economic emancipation to the people who own or work on the land. Sugarcane farming employed some marginalised groups, particularly the youth, who continue to form the majority of the sugarcane workforce. Despite the perceived compassion of the commercial farming corporations, most people working in the sugarcane farms in regions like Busoga continue to be disproportionately poor and experience acute and persistent threats to food security (Uganda Bureau of Statistics 2017). Instead of delivering economic salvation, sugarcane farming has become a curse for Ugandans.



63 POWER project women in November 2020 protested Hoima Sugar Limited's plans to convert about 6000 hectares of Bugoma Forest into a sugarcane plantation. Some women and their families had already been evicted from their land around the forest. They used the protest to share their experience of exclusion from decisions relating to their ownership and use of land. The protest was held within Bugoma Forest, providing a powerful backdrop for the speeches and interventions made. Participants included affected women alongside local government leaders, media, officials from the National Forestry Authority (NFA) and other community-based organisations (CBOs) and civil society organisations (CSOs) from Hoima and Kikuube. In the lead up to the event, women supported by NAPE organised joint campaigns to conserve the Bugoma Forest with tour operators. They engaged the NFA, Hoima and Kikuube Districts' Land Officers and forest service sectors. The November event was strategically held just ahead of national elections. The protest mobilised stakeholders to understand the realities of the families that have already been evicted and how they wanted redress.



“My life has never been the same since being evicted from our land in 2015 by Hoima Sugar Limited, and the communities around Bugoma Forest will have similar challenges if you don’t come up to fight. We had land for cultivation and food security before we were evicted. But now we are struggling to get what to eat. You better wake up!” – Turyahebwa, Internally Displaced Persons (IDP) Camp, Kijayo

Sandra Atusinguza, a long-term advocate for conservation of the forest under the Save Bugoma Forest Campaign, said, “The forest is important to everyone, but most importantly to rural women who are farmers and derive their livelihood from agriculture.” Sandra noted that Hoima Sugar Limited already has a history of evictions and was contributing to the worsening of community livelihoods of people in Kijayo, especially those now living in IDP camps.

Results of the Bugoma Forest advocacy event

The event which culminated in a peaceful protest was documented and amplified by the media. The timing of the event attracted the attention of President Museveni who said that he wished to meet with the women when travelling to the district as part of his election campaign in December 2020 (though his visit did not materialise). The President made a promise that the government would do whatever it takes to protect the threatened Bugoma Forest. Although both commitments remain unfulfilled, this compelled the protesters to think beyond the moment. As a result, they resolved to create a conservation association named Women for Bugoma Forest Land, comprising civil society activists, tour operators, journalists, and other allies who want to keep Bugoma Forest free from development.

The association has still not been officially established. Nonetheless, the women who engaged in this activism highlighted the power and reach of the media as the Bugoma Forest protest event deepened mainstream journalists' understanding of the issue. They also popularised messages of the danger of degrading the forest ecosystem and the forest's role in absorbing carbon emissions, as well as the impact of land grabs on women. The event was an opportunity for cross-movement solidarity, including those in the environmental and eco-tourist movements. The intersectional participation demonstrated Uganda's thirst for a stronger Ecofeminist movement.

Ecofeminism, extraction of women's labour, and the colonial legacy

Ecofeminists view globalisation as an extension of capitalism which is at the centre of all social and environmental crises. Ecofeminism argues that the fundamental characteristic of capitalism is patriarchy. Ecofeminist Political Theory claims that the material and discursive establishments of patriarchal capitalism need the systematic subjugation and exploitation of both the natural environment and women. Shiva and Mies (1993) attempt to analyse material conditions that shape relations between nature, women, and men. The changing role of the nation-state births myriad issues, including that the state is intrinsically an institution of patriarchal capitalism (Sydee and Beder, 2001). Shiva's Ecofeminism sees the state as historically created as an establishment supporting capital through a process of "housewifisation" of women, since it is impossible for the economy to directly control women's fertility, sexuality, and work capacity. Housewifisation refers to the separation of production and reproduction as a need that has been created to suit capitalism, with the state assisting in creating this condition. This process pushes women to the private sphere and prohibits their participation in capitalist industries and civil society.

Black African women from the farming and working classes face triple oppression as a result of their race, class, and gender. Tracing back women's struggles from the colonial era in Africa, women have not only been pushing back on the capitalist mode of production, which undermined their land rights and livelihoods, but also against colonialism. Colonialism in Africa was founded on white supremacist ideas.

Colonial systems in Africa left a system that favors white people over black people; African women still experience multiple oppressions as history has given privilege to men who are said to be rational. Women are largely viewed as bodies (Hearn, 2014). This construction of gender dates back to ancient Western tradition, and in Africa, it has been reinforced by colonialism, creating male hegemony.

Women, particularly the farming and working-class, are confined to playing the triple role as postulated by Moser (1999): productive, reproductive, and community roles. The productive role includes working on the land, trading, and other income-generating duties; the reproductive role involves fetching firewood, cooking, fetching water, looking after the family, and other household and care work; the community work includes largely unpaid work that women perform at funerals, religious, and cultural gatherings. Compared to their male counterparts, women tend to perform more unpaid work, which consumes much more of their time. In Africa, women spend 4.4 hours daily on unpaid care work whilst men spend just 1.3 hours per day. The Food and Agriculture Organisation (2019) states that women are primarily responsible for planting, watering gardens, weeding, harvesting, and marketing. They also perform most of the firewood gathering, food processing, and cooking. However, most women do not have decision-making powers and have no control over their earnings. This set-up, which Shiva and Mies (1993) refer to as the housewifisation of women, is quite evident in rural areas where women's needs are trivialised and pushed to the periphery. Their labour and input are needed, but they are confined to the unpaid role they perform in their communities and households. The POWER project has contributed to reversing this norm – as well as the acceptance of this norm – as evidenced below.

"Before POWER project, we did not know about our rights at the husband's home. Men would sell land without our knowledge. Women would be told to leave land to the buyer. Now we no longer accept to be witnesses to land transactions. We insist on being recorded like the men. Before POWER, under RAP 1 of the Tilenga project, men would take all the compensation. In March 2021 during the bicycle caravan event conducted to commemorate International Women's Day, women petitioned, and I represented the women of Nguedo Sub-county. When RAP 5 of the Tilenga project came, I stood my ground. I no longer feared. Now we have a joint account. If he tries to cheat me, I know where to turn for redress."

— Judith Beirwoth, Nguedo FGD, Buliisa District.



“The POWER project has made me a happier person. I am a widow. Because of the POWER trainings I now know about rights and how to speak to people. Further to this, I find that I have authority in my home: if there is any matter in the family, I am consulted.”

— Aluku Esther, Nwoya District.



The excluded, invisible women

Shiva (1993) asserts that globalisation and placing international interests ahead of national interests results in national fragmentation and loss of national identity. Ecofeminist Political Theory is based on the premise that due to the necessary exclusion of women’s reproductive work from the formal economic system, women are living an alternative reality that gives them a different relationship to nature than men (Sydee and Beder, 2001). Shiva further argues that women undertake life-affirming, wholesome practices like child care and homesteading throughout the day. Consequently, women have what she describes as the privilege of embodying the attributes of culture that are rooted in nature, placing them in a unique position as the historical agents of change with the potential to liberate humanity and nature (Shiva, 1993). This paper is based on the premise that particularly farming, working-class, and indigenous women, have the capacity to organise, build movements, and use their knowledge and experiences to inform an alternate development pathway.

On attainment of independence, most African states stressed patrilineality. They promoted male hegemony despite vast evidence showing that in pre-colonial times, descent systems had only a weak commitment to patrilineality. Bilateral and matrilineal systems such as that of the Lozi of Zambia or many tribes of Malawi were commonplace (Cheater and Gaidzanwa, 1996). This contradicts the persisting myth that newly independent states in Africa have overcome the colonial inheritance of discrimination. Ecofeminism traces women’s oppression to colonialism, capitalist, patriarchy and western civilisation, which has caused massive land degradation in pursuit of profits for elites.



Photo Credit-Esther Ruth Mbabazi

Image above: Akello Margaret, chairperson of Can Mitoyole group in Amuru district.

Women who participated in this study stated that they need their land so that they can pay for their children's healthcare, education, food, clothing, and other household expenses, raising the question of what role their spouses are playing in the household economy.



“We need to own the land so that we can send our children to school and receive health care. Women have to work hard so that we can put food on the table. We have our village saving schemes which enable us to save our money so that we can pay for our land title as women.”

—Ayot Annet, POWER project participant.

When women stand up as individuals, they are atomised and fragmented, their voices drowned. The power structure operates to divide any united resistance against it. This is seen in how movements quickly fade away once they start; they organise around a certain demand but struggle to maintain that momentum over a period of time. It explains why there are often difficulties in bringing women together as a united front, even though they are fighting for the same cause. Such alienation is what maintains structural violence, precisely what the POWER project supports women to push against, and as illustrated below, duty bearers have observed changes that POWER supported women have started to make in this regard.

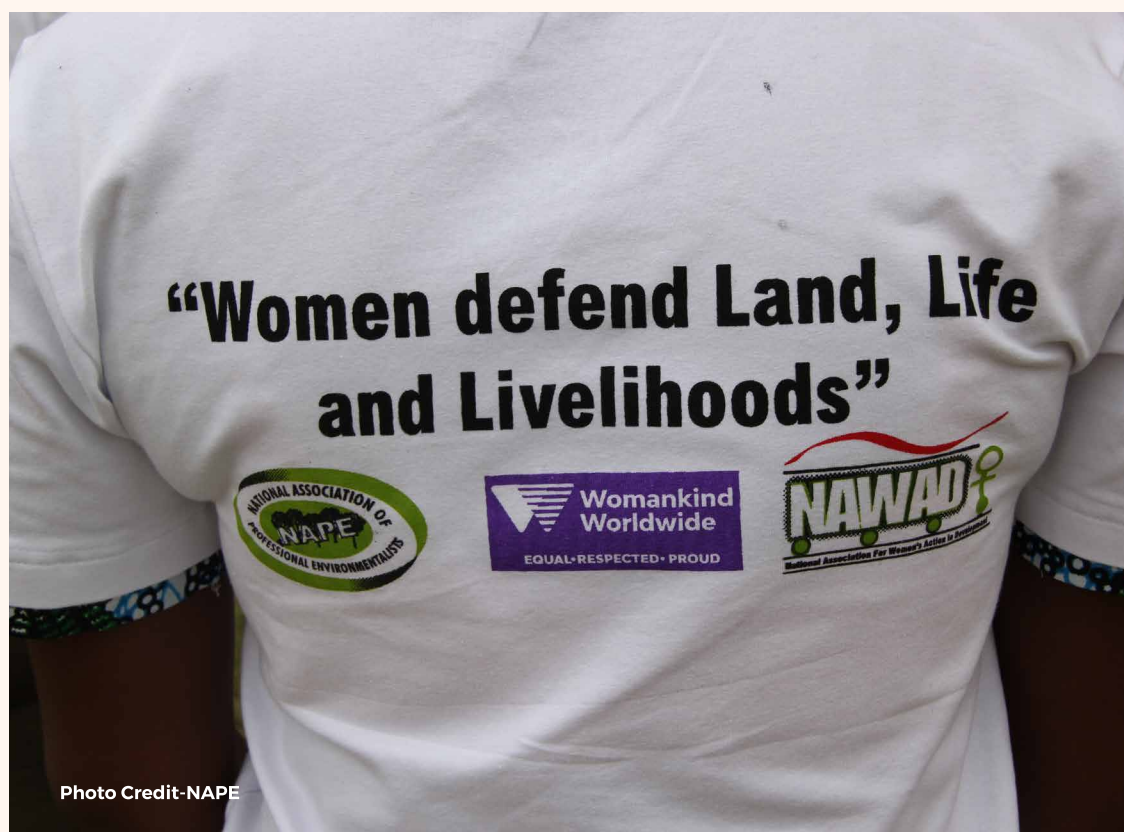


Photo Credit-NAPE



“The work of NAWAD has opened eyes. Women now know their rights. If those rights are violated, they seek help. If a man is about to sell land without her participation as an equal seller, women will raise this issue. In the past, they would just keep quiet. If they see another woman whose rights are not being upheld, they try to help the woman to enjoy her land rights. They have always come to me as a group.”

—John Ben Okot, Local Council III Chairperson, Purongo Town Council



“POWER project has created awareness in women on the existence of their rights. Some can stand up to any land rights violations and even defend the claim. Others still remain timid. But that is where the group comes in handy. They can speak for themselves in all fora: the home, the community, in public. Before NAWAD involvement, they would not speak.”

– Fred Okecha, District Community Development Officer DCDO of Nwoya District

The irony of structural violence is that those who suffer from it do not express direct anger at the system perpetrating the violence. Instead, they naturalise the structural violence and make it part of their social norms. For example, a “virtuous” woman is one who succumbs to this form of violence and stays calm in the face of injustice. It is said that she will make a “good wife.” In religious and cultural circles, questioning authority is frowned upon, and celebrating poverty is naturalised as part of a woman’s virtuosity. Structural violence conceives itself as an indispensable reality.

The stories and struggles of Black African women remain largely untold and misrepresented because most of the literature that exists today about them is written from the perspective of white middle-class men. This has distorted the realities and struggles of African women. Most anthropological and historical information that exists on women in pre-colonial and colonial Africa has been penned by men, mainly from other cultures and backgrounds (Cheater, 1986), and while their main prejudices are often obvious, the subtleties of different cultural and gender perspectives are less easy to pin down. Jonsson (2016) further states that even the feminist voices “are all white.”

This requires African women to produce knowledge within a feminist framework that speaks to and represents their realities. Whilst the word “feminism” was not known amongst most of the research participants, the way they describe how they engage with other women and their methodologies as they have their women community meetings is feminist. One of the women mentioned that:



“We formed village savings clubs because we do not have access to capital. When we have meetings, we teach each other through our experiences. We lend each other money at affordable rates so that we can fight poverty. Some women use the money to get land titles. We stand with the widows who have to fight their male kin when they want to steal land and possessions.”

– Christine Nyangoma, POWER project participant.

Nyangoma’s statement details a feminist solidarity economics. Organising to hold meetings in the communities is one way that movements are built and sustained. The women are taking control of their lives and fighting their exclusion through their village savings clubs and other forms of cooperation and solidarity.

Solidarity is the lifeblood of feminist organising and therefore needed at moments where women are facing injustice. Its existence here supports the assertion that feminism is not alien to Africa, but rather entrenched in the way that women support and build each other up in rural areas.



Photo Credit—Esther Ruth Mbabazi

Members of Nguedo united women's group in Bulisa District.





Criticisms against Ecofeminist Political Theory

Ecofeminist Theory has often been criticised for not presenting a united front. Materialist Ecofeminism is identified with the works of theorists like Vandana Shiva, Maria Mies and Ariel Salleh, where Shiva (1988) tables a materialist view that links labour, power, and property as causing the domination and subjugation of both women and nature. Cultural or Spiritual Ecofeminism associated with authors like Riane Eisler, Carol J. Adams, and Starhawk asserts that the Earth is alive and that humanity is interconnected through care, compassion, and nonviolence. It is not necessarily associated with any particular religion (Eisler, 1990). Some Africans are presently developing an African Ecofeminist Political Theory (Siwila, 2014). This paper decidedly leans upon the works of Shiva, African Feminisms, and Acholonu's Motherism, which speak to POWER participants' experiences.

Ecofeminism is further charged for being essentialist and ethnocentric, its theorists supposedly anti-intellectual goddess-worshippers who portray Earth as female and make totalising and ahistorical mandates for worldwide veganism. These sweeping generalisations often forwarded without specific and supporting documentation have been disproven repeatedly in academia and popular journals, but unfortunately, cultural disdain continues (Gaard *et al.*, 2013). Ecofeminism arose from a variety of diverse theories, including essentialist feminisms, liberal feminism, Marxism, anarchism, and socialist feminism. Ecofeminists continue to refine and ground their analyses. No outlier position can aptly discredit its entire body of knowledge.


Whilst Ecofeminism offers scathing judgements of capitalism, it does not directly attack the market economy, giving only vague assessments of the market system. Ecofeminism further shows a devotion to the stringent dichotomy between men and women, humans and nature, which creates a dualism that is too strict and centred on these distinctions. Such criticisms are wanting, if done without intersectional analyses.

One of the challenges with Ecofeminism is that, whilst it can be applied to Africa, its origin and analysis are not based on African contexts. It must speak to African women's realities. "Feminist" is a discipline, in its mainstream sense – a concept and political theory rooted in the academic, public space. Most women who are affected by environmental injustice do not have access to this space. We must interrogate whether there exists an African grassroots Ecofeminism that women affected by extractives in Uganda can rally behind. Feminist perspectives, including Ecofeminism, have been largely pushed by women in academia, and are based on the understanding of the world as masculine – a world where the creation of women's rhetorical paths is not accommodated, especially those of Black African women.



Ecofeminist responses to criticisms

In light of criticisms, Ecofeminists using materialistic lenses embarked on research to integrate global feminist environmental justice (Gaard, 2011) into their scholarship. Essentialism was most pronounced among the North American academics, whilst in the Global South and Europe, race, class, species domination and gender were outlined within a more grounded materialistic conceptualisation. Despite all the criticism, Ecofeminist Theory is useful to explain the conditions and pursuits of women in the climate justice movement, including farming and indigenous women in Uganda.



Mies and Shiva (1993) further offer criticism of current development models, dominant ideas of women's emancipation, and the myth of 'catching up' with modernisation. The Ecofeminist epistemology and methodology advocates subsistence production, sustainability, and regenerative economies. It argues for a recognition of the limits of human consumption and Earth's capacity. It centres reciprocity and ending exploitation. Mies, Shiva, and others provide responses to critics that resonate with the realities of POWER project participants. Extraction of mineral resources in Uganda and other African countries cannot be separated from the colonial legacy. British relations with once-occupied African countries have interrupted post-colonial development (Austin, 2010). Against this background, one can trace the marginalisation and exclusion of women in the development of Uganda.




Locating African women in the western development model

To build Uganda's ecofeminist movement, it becomes critical to locate women in the western development model that oppresses them. Merchant (1983) writes about the domination of nature under male ideologies, linking this to the idea of colonisation, conquest, and possession of other lands and peoples. In European science and technology, modernisation was linked to the persecution of witches; this is further linked to the slave trade and the destruction of subsistence economies in colonised territories (Merchant, 1983). Witch trials and witch burning in Britain were high from the 16th to 18th centuries. Women, who were previously perceived as possessing healing powers with an understanding of nature and animals, were accused of being Satanic. Laws were passed to make it a crime to practice witchcraft (Scarre, 1987), and similar laws exist across much of the Commonwealth of Nations today, notably in Africa. In contrast, feminists consider witches to be women who are daring, courageous, intelligent, curious, sexually liberated, and revolutionary (Doyle, 2019). Ecofeminism views the burning of witches as violence against women driven by capitalism, wrongly delegitimising indigenous women's knowledge systems and aiding the growth of capitalism through destruction of women's subsistence economies.

Industrial mining and agriculture are part of the modernisation process and the growth of technology. In Uganda, like other African countries, modernisation and industrialisation processes are associated with land-grabbing, destruction of indigenous territories, and the proletarianisation of the natives. Commercial sugarcane farming and industrial mining, which opened their doors in Uganda during the colonial era, played a central role in the modernisation of the country. East Africans provided cheap raw materials and cheap labour for the colonial project.

Ecofeminist Theory argues that western development models are destructive to the natural environment and women's bodies. When production processes are not modelled in a way that is consistent with the principles of gender justice and environmental justice, the production and distribution of goods and services should not increase existing inequalities. Benefits and costs should be better distributed. Whilst African women bear the highest cost of industrial mining and agriculture, however, their contributions to the economy remain unaccounted for and invisibilised. Whilst mining may be necessary for the provision of raw materials for the whole country, if transnational corporations carry it out, there is vast evidence that suggests that local economies will not benefit because of IFFs.



As in European women's experiences during the rapid growth of industry, Africans are being dispossessed of their land. European men were recruited into industrial labour where they lived on low wages; women had to make a living as dancers, singers, sex workers, and tricksters, all while providing care work and selling commodities (Mies, 1986). Parallels between European industrialisation and today's post-colonial Africa are uncanny. Many rural African women have migrated to towns to work as vegetable vendors, sex workers, shebeen queens, domestic workers, and sex workers (Hungwe, 2006). In both historical contexts, Ecofeminist Theory explains the marginalisation of women through capital accumulation within a patriarchal system. Western civilisation in both Africa and Europe has subjugated women as well as nature.

Uganda's economy, like others, is a complicated adaptive system. It is typified by the competitive pursuit of corporate interests. The mining sector should not be seen in isolation from global systems and trends, as Uganda is embedded in this economy where it is often under pressure to catch up. Negotiations with oil companies have been opaque with minimal citizen scrutiny. Externalised costs are already self-evident and will grow as the industry expands. Nigeria and Ghana offer stark examples of the costs that lie ahead. Women carry these costs due to pre-existing gender inequalities. Looking at capitalism as a complex adaptive system whose distinct feature is mass production and the need to maximise profits, the mining sector responds to meet the needs of capital. This ostracises rural African women in all ways imaginable.




Toward African Ecofeminism

In addition to Ecofeminism, African Feminism should be one of the frameworks that underpin Uganda's movement-building work. It explains the realities of African women past and present. African Feminism challenges the term "feminism" because it is a western term that most African women do not identify with, and it has origins in white women's struggles (Nkealah, 2016). African Feminism seeks to centre African women's lived experiences. This holds for this paper as it employs Feminist Participatory Action Research (FPAR), a methodology rooted in the women's lived experiences and realities. That the FPAR takes place within an African context to shape Ugandan women's narratives and movement building makes African Feminist Theory suited to explain the conditions of women affected by mining. African Feminist Theory is reliant on indigenous "blueprints," drawing from herstories, situatedness, and cultures of African indigenes so that the relevant tools required to strengthen women and educate men are employed (Nkealah, 2016).

Bringing African Feminist Theory into the analysis of how colonialism shaped the mining sector in Uganda and other African countries, Elliot (2015) observed that new theories – particularly those emerging from Africa – are subjected to more scrutiny and judged based on the standards set in the past. Elliot asserts that this tends to discourage ingenuity and innovation. This is particularly the case with Motherism.


Motherism, Stiwanism, and Nego-feminism are theories or models that offer African alternatives to mainstream feminism, and are relevant in explaining the experiences of African women and their situatedness in the colonial herstory which shaped African women's lives and their current position in society. Stiwanism is the form of African Feminism that emphasises the institutionalised system which oppresses women based on colonial and neo-colonial history. Nego-Feminism is informed by the principles of negotiation, compromise, and balance. Negotiation implies the giving and taking that is believed to have been practised in Africa over centuries, and it emphasises finding ways to negotiate with or around patriarchy (Dosekun, 2019).




However, this paper departs from Stiwanism and Nego-Feminism and applies Motherism as the strand of African Feminism best-placed to complement Ecofeminism. It is particularly useful in understanding Ugandan women's orientation to extractives, and can serve as a framing through which an African Ecofeminist movement can be built.

(African Feminisms also include Womanism, which is largely founded on the narratives of African women in the diaspora; Stiwanism, which puts African women at the core of the discourse and is entrenched in African women's realities and experiences; Femalism which centres the African women's body as the unit of analysis and narratives; and Nego-feminism and snail-sense Feminism which advocate for the inclusion of men in Feminism, arguing that such engagements are necessary for the emancipation of women. Motherism views rural women as essential for and performing the task of nurturing society (Nkealah, 2006). All African feminist theories were born from a desire to seek gender justice for African women. Whether these theories can be combined in order to come up with a solid stance on the plight of the African woman is also open for further interrogation (Alkali *et al.*, 2013). The relevance of these models to global practice is also up for discussion.)

Motherism calls for protection and conservation of 'Mother' Earth and embraces the human struggle. Motherism does not have sex barriers, as it centres on cooperation, partnership, compassion, tolerance, and empathy (Acholonu, 1995). This is why it becomes a necessary framework to trace the marginalisation and oppression of women and indigenes from the colonial period, and their access to resources. Coupled with Ecofeminist Political Theory, Motherism assists in framing the exclusion and marginalisation of women in the extractives sector against Uganda's historical background.



One of the aims of the FPAR methodologies is to empower women and inform actions that are directed at the liberation of participants. FPAR helps discern actions that they could employ to liberate themselves, and unveils clear propositions to relevant authorities for women-centred, women-informed mining sector transformation. Finally, African Feminist Theory includes collaboration, gender inclusion, and accommodation so that both women and men are able to make contributions to improving the material conditions of African women. This paper, while focusing mostly on women and their specific issues within the mining sector, does not recommend the total exclusion of men in the African Ecofeminist movement building process. Whilst women's spaces should be created in order to allow women to freely talk and fully participate in all the processes that are intended for movement building, men should be engaged in their various capacities as traditional leaders, government officials, and civil society players. African Feminism opines that engagements with men should be done because the liberation of women cannot be done by women on their own, but with men giving solidarity and support to women's struggles and developing the political will to change the conditions of women.



Rallying Behind African Ecofeminism for organising



Photo credit—Esther Ruth Mbabazi

Image above: Members of Lancan Kwite women's group in Nwoya district

Bringing Ecofeminism and African Feminism together allows for an intersectional approach to interrogate the extractives sector in Uganda. Wangari Maathai inspires and informs this study as her Green Belt Movement arguably epitomises the spirit of African Ecofeminism in a neighboring East African country. Maathai notes the close links between African Feminism and African ecological struggles, which question both the patriarchal and neo-colonial structures that undermine the continent (African Arguments, 2019). This analysis becomes critical for the women's struggle for environmental justice in the extractives sector. The sector has destroyed animal, human, and plant life and has taken land away from its people. Oil extraction in Uganda continues to cause major environmental harm and drives rampant land theft. African Ecofeminism rooted in Motherism offers hope against this chaos.

Present-day Africa cannot be understood outside of its colonial history (Bertolt, 2018). "New African subjectivities and identities" have been created by Western domination (Bertolt, 2018:3). The interrogation of Western modernity and civilisation, as stated by Shiva (1988), should be interrogated to understanding the atrocious domination and inferiorisation of the Global South peoples. In this context, modernity becomes associated with colonialism and racism (Bertolt, 2018). Thus, African Feminism and Ecofeminism are both required in Uganda.

According to Ige (2008:12), western feminism is problematic “in that its radical posture demonises men and its effort at the militant transformation of the patriarchal institutions in society.” African Feminist Theory, conversely, accommodates for gender and sees human relationships as complementary. This view brings in the relevance of African Feminism to this movement building and organising work. Women hosting extractives projects are often not viewed as hostile to their male counterparts, yet unequal power relations exist between men and women.

African women are diverse in every country and even within their local areas. They hold various identities simultaneously. Ecofeminist Theory refuses a theory of power that is reductive to class or gender and assumes that oppression takes different forms, and that an individual may be situated as both oppressed and oppressor (Plumwood, 1992). Black African women have experienced multiple forms of oppression, and there have been efforts to develop feminist ideas and pedagogies that are rooted in and reactive to the contexts and conditions of Africa. Africa is still entrenched in the representation of sex, body, and gender that existed during the colonial period. This necessitates African Feminist perspectives on the oppression of women.

Pilane (2016) claims that Africans were the first feminists as they have always been involved in struggles for their liberation and the liberation of their countries. This perspective became more prominent at the World Conference on Women of 1985 (Swaim-Fox, 2018). African Feminism is often considered necessary as a response to the exclusion of Black women’s narratives in white, western feminisms. However, it should be noted that African Feminism is not solely a reactionary theory. It comes from African women academics’ own ingenuity and desire to create a feminist theory that speaks to their backgrounds and experiences. Nkealah (2006) states that African Feminist Theory was founded on the desire to create an African woman who is liberal, productive, and self-reliant within the heterogeneous culture of Africa. African Feminism is often considered as seeking to modify culture as it impacts women in different societies. African Feminism does not seek to merge all African women into one unrealistic expectation of sisterhood, but appreciates the differences that exist amongst women on the continent. African Feminist Theory has also been criticised for not paying attention to other factors that affect African women, such as sex work, the white saviour complex, sexual minorities’ experiences, and violence against African women. This paper seeks not to offer a historically definitive strategy for African women’s liberation, but asserts that consolidating diverse African Ecofeminisms would generate momentum in this direction.




Building African Ecofeminist alternatives: Recommendations



Photo credit: Esther Ruth Mbabazi

Image above: Members of Langajji women's group in Nwoya district.



Feminists have made progress in reimagining and proposing alternative models to the current extractivist development model. Responsibility for ‘changing the system’ should not lie on the women and girls being adversely affected by it, but with the power-holders and decision-makers who must be held to account. Having said this, women and girls have tremendous agency to make a difference in advancing an African Ecofeminism movement, building on what has already been achieved to help usher in new social relations and improved relationships with Earth. The imagined alternative economy is socially decentralised and ecologically sustainable, centring local ecology, wellbeing, and rights.

To this end, POWER project participants have recommended the following for both Ecofeminists and those who can serve Ecofeminist goals as decision-makers in public and private sectors.



Recommendations for Ecofeminists

1. *Build community, cooperation, storytelling, and mutual care to strengthen African ecofeminism.*

Solidarity, cooperation, sharing, conscientiousness, co-participation, co-construction, social efficacy, and social cohesion should be the values that inform the African Ecofeminist. Alternative economies should be driven by cooperative enterprises, which are independent associations of people who come together voluntarily to address their economic, cultural, and social needs through collectively-owned and democratically-run enterprises, as opposed to hierarchical businesses, NGOs, and institutions. Alternative food production systems must be based on relationships with specific geographic locations. African Ecofeminists must question the transportation of food stuffs, the use of agrochemicals, human and animal wellbeing, labour practices, and environmental, economic, and social aspects of production processes.

Women must make sure that they have space to care for each other and do things that are expressive, fun, and joyous. Song, dance, storytelling, and artistic expression is preeminent for African Ecofeminists.



“When you sing your story, that’s powerful. There is education that excludes. We want to use song, drama, and every part of our body as ecofeminists to live and be alive. We’ll use our language, tongue, and smell – every part of who we are. As ecofeminists we want to flourish – to be big, bold and bright and beautiful. Our emotions, our songs, our beauty is carried with us wherever we go in our movements and struggles.” – *Leonie Okelaitho, POWER project participant.*

African Ecofeminists can develop herstory as a way of subverting the dominant narrative, which is usually propaganda rooted in authoritarianism, colonialism, capitalism, or patriarchy. They must centre rural women as heroines, instead of first ladies and the wives of other politicians and wealthy men.



2. Reconceptualise power and resistance to include women's everyday actions.

The types of resistance spoken about many, including by some women in the POWER project are masculine, such as riots. Household and community resistance is, in fact, radical resistance; it is subversive. Women taking part in a march or resisting the cutting of Bugoma Forest are creating subversive politics. Women have imagination, so they don't need to do what others do. Women put their bodies on the line every day and have done so powerfully on rural Uganda's frontlines for land rights and climate justice. Rural women's ingenuity must be encouraged, celebrated, and disseminated for inspiration.

There is need to understand women's daily acts of resistance as part of a broader feminist response to patriarchal and extractivist realities. Every single day women act in resistance; saying "no" in their households, bedrooms, and to MNCs is the building of an African Ecofeminist movement. Stories of sexual violence, rape, and abuse are now coming to the fore in our project meetings. Many POWER participants have experienced heinous acts while challenging local resource grabs. Mainstreaming resistance to such violence is necessary within an African Ecofeminist movement.

3. Create and nurture women-only spaces that are inclusive of all women-including those who are particularly marginalised and experience multiple and intersecting forms of oppression.

Creating all-women spaces should be part of political training. It's important to start considering that women have the right to organise separately. How women seek solidarity is a strategic question best determined in spaces safe for them.

Ecofeminists can help to achieve this by seeking support from relevant organisations and contacting local businesses and establishments to make use of their spaces. Some meetings can be designated as women-only.



“Men organise themselves all the time. Part of resistance is to say, ‘We have the right to organise separately like you.’ In order to tell our stories, we need a safe environment. If there were men in this room, we wouldn't have spoken so frankly about rape. As an ecofeminist movement, we always say that the personal is political, so we bring the movement into our bedrooms. Men have had their space for a long time, so it's also our time to own our space.” – Anonymous participant, Feminist School in Hoima.

4. Conduct further gender-sensitive, non-extractive research to inform the movement.

Women must carry out liberatory research that can inform grassroots women-driven, women-informed development alternatives speaking to the realities that women face in their daily lives. Feminist Participatory Action Research (FPAR) is a methodology that deliberately creates collaborative relationships. FPAR enables women activists to conduct research that enables them to take action advancing grassroots women's interests.

Carrying out research “as usual” with women is gendered and alienates women from the very process that seeks to generate knowledge about them. Methodologies should therefore raise questions about the researchers' own socialisation and perceptions. In the process of implementing emancipatory research processes, there is a need to ensure that the research process does not fall into the trap of extracting knowledge from grassroots women in a way that marginalises them.



Recommendations for decision-makers

1. *Phase out and ultimately ban MNC extractives and invest in agroecology.*

Agroecology should provide the framework for agriculture in Uganda and provide the basis for understanding how the country should move toward climate resilient agriculture which meets the needs of smallholder women farmers, other rural women, and farmers in general. Extractives, especially when undertaken by big foreign business, threaten Uganda's food security and the wellbeing of its people, ecology, and future. Fossil fuels are unnecessary for energy production.

Decision-makers can help Uganda move away from an extractivist economy to sufficiency economies. Ecofeminists should be called upon to define the principles of this transition. African Ecofeminist economies should support the social good, strengthen the local food systems and solidarity-based production chains, and nurture cooperative markets. Investments should be made in renewable energy systems, and the funds for this can be found in divestments from fossil fuels.



Photo credit-Esther Ruth Mbabazi

Image above: Sayuni Byaruhanga learnt about kitchen gardening and other types of agroecology farming through POWER project. She currently grows and produces different foods.

2. *Invest in an enabling political environment for women's organising.*

An enabling political environment and a supportive national government which provides space for women to assemble and promote a more ecofeminist approach is important for women's organising. Decision-makers should pass policies that expand political space for such advocacy.



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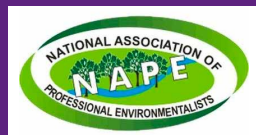
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