



Climate Change and Industrial Growth: Can Uganda Achieve Sustainable Industrialization?

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Benard Cankara

PhD Candidate (Public Policy and Governance), Kyambogo University
Research Fellow, University of Ghana, Accra

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1.0 Introduction

The global demand for industrial products is skyrocketing because of population surges. Currently, the world is home to 8.1 billion people¹. Thus, consumption needs are high, prompting a high level of industrialization. In Africa, the demand is even more, stemming from low industrialization in light of the bulging populace. There are now 1.21 billion Africans on the continent, yet governments still rely on importation rather than local production. This has exacerbated the unfavorable balance of payment, extreme poverty, unemployment, and debt. African countries are now in the race to make amendments. Industrialization and value addition are now considered major links to economic stability. The African Union clearly stipulate that no country has ever achieved prosperity for its people without meaningful industrialization². However, there is a new reality-Climate Change. The litmus test is whether Africa can achieve her aspirations in light of the new global reality. The global position is that industrialization should be achieved without compromising future needs. SDGs 8, 9, and 13 are specific to achieving decent work and economic growth, industry and infrastructure, and climate change. Indeed! These are very complex questions, not just for Uganda, but globally. Many African countries, such as Egypt, Morocco, South Africa, Nigeria, Tunisia, Namibia, Ethiopia, Gabon, and Cote d'Ivoire are making significant progress towards industrialization. While this progress is being made, the world is concerned that

Africa may not attain the newly updated Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) satisfactorily. Although the current global dilemma rests squarely on the shoulders of industrialized and developed nations. Africa now has a purpose to avoid past mistakes. According to NDC Hub (2022)³, forty-seven African countries recently renewed and increased their NDC by 6.9% which is very ambitious and an indication of Africa's commitment to climate adaptation.

2.0 Local Context

Uganda has one of the fastest-growing populations worldwide with a population of 48 million people⁴. The population is projected to reach 52 million by 2025. This has created a mismatch between development and services. The country now faces glaring demand for services, employment, and infrastructure, among others. Thus, an industrial path is inevitable to ensure economic stability. However, the government must find a balance between industrialization and achieving a nationally determined contribution (NDC). Although as noted, Uganda like most African countries are not directly responsible for climate change adversity, it only contributes 1.39 metric tons of greenhouse gas emission which is way below the global average of 7.99 tons⁵.

The country now boasts of over 27 industrial parks established across the country⁶ but this is likely to increase her greenhouse gas emission (GHG) exponentially. According to USAID report⁷, the greenhouse gas had

¹ Worldometer (2023). Uganda's Population Projection

² African Development Bank (2023), African Industrialization Index 2023. <https://www.afdb.org/en/documents/africa-industrialization-index-2022>

³ Africa NDC Hub (2022). Doubling Down on Delivering Africa's Climate Action Priorities. https://www.isdb.org/sites/default/files/media/documents/2023-01/ANDCH%20Flagship%20Report_Final%20long%20version_ENG_compressed.pdf

⁴ Worldometer (2023). Uganda's Population

⁵ Ministry of Water and Environment (2015). Uganda's Intended Nationally Determined Contribution (INDC). <https://www4.unfccc.int/sites/submissions/INDC/Published%20Documents/Uganda/1/INDC%20Uganda%20final%20%2014%20October%20%202015.%20mi%20nor%20correction.28.10.15.pdf>

⁶ Uganda Investment Authority (2023). Industrial and Business Parks in Uganda. <https://www.ugandainvest.go.ug/parks>.

⁷ USAID Report: Greenhouse Gas Emissions in Uganda. <https://www.climatelinks.org/sites/default/files/asset/>

increased by 50% between 1990 and 2012, and it is estimated to increase to 148.8 MtCO_{2e} in 2030 and 235.7 MtCO_{2e} by 2050. Thus, putting a dent on whether Uganda is likely to industrialize sustainably. In addition to industrial parks, the current development of fossil fuels in the Albertine graben in Western Uganda, which is expected to commence production in 2025, will also aggravate greenhouse gas emissions. The Environmental Law Alliance estimates that the EACOP will produce approximately 104 million metric tons of carbon per year for the next 25 to 40 years. Therefore, it is extremely important for Uganda to match its policy priorities to sustainability.

In light of its industrial prospects, Uganda is among the countries most affected by climate change. A recent ranking by ND-GAIN⁸, places Uganda as the 12th worst country in climate adaptation. It has recently suffered from extreme floods resulting in displacements of over 8,000 people (Cankara, 2021)⁹. Heat waves and air pollution are also on the rise. The WHO now places the air quality of Kampala at its peak with the highest concentration of 57µg/m³ above the recommended level.

3.0 Interplay of Industrial Policy and Climate Change Policy

Uganda's industrial policy emphasizes improved quality in process, input, and output (quality assessments of fertilizers and input material, use of technological skills), international market linkages with interest in increasing exports, lower costs of industrial finance, improved integration with agriculture and mineral exploitation, and environmentally sustainable industrialization. Can this environmentally

sustainable industrialization be achieved? The nexus between industrialization and the environment is not clear in terms of policy and implementation. The coherences of these two policy issues in National Development Plan III were also inadequate. For instance, Uganda National Development Plan III¹⁰ is silent on how to deal with the rising air pollution within urban cities, including Kampala, while still pursuing an industrial policy agenda. There is a complete disregard for green industrial parks. This policy does not mandate compulsory afforestation in industrial parks. A recent study showed that Uganda is losing its vegetation cover at a much faster rate than afforesting. Furthermore, while NEMA is permitted to undertake an environmental assessment before the establishment of any industry, several industrial activities are currently established within the wetlands, such as Lwera Sand mining on the fringes of Lake Victoria, Kinawataka wetland, Namanve Swamp, and forest reserve extension, which has been converted into a national industrial park, as many examples across the country have challenged government commitment to sustainable industrialization.

Therefore, this mixture of degazetting wetlands for industrial parks demonstrates ambiguity, lack of commitment, and confusion regarding the implementation of policies.

4.0 Policy Recommendations

1. There is a need for clarity and direction in policy. If Uganda is pursuing an environmentally sound industrial policy, it means that environmental considerations are given the first priority before industrial investment decisions. In

[document/GHG%20Emissions%20Factsheet%20Uganda_v5_11-02-15_edited_rev08-18-2016.pdf](#)

⁸ ND-GAIN (2021). Country Rankings on Country Index, Vulnerability and Readiness.

<https://gain.nd.edu/our-work/country-index/rankings/>

⁹ Cankara, B (2021). What the Future Holds for the World: A Critical Review of the East African Response

to the Paris Climate Accord and Climate Change Mainstreaming. https://static.s123-cdn-static-d.com/uploads/4416013/normal_605d733171946.pdf

¹⁰ National Development Plan 3 (2022). Uganda National Development Plan 3

essence, the litmus test for any industrial investment is an environmental plan.

2. Greater coherence between industrial policy, environmental plans, and National Development Plan III is critical. Linkages between these three policy documents are lacking. It is imperative that these policies are well aligned with clarity on more power authority resting with the Ministry of Water and Environment and not with the Uganda Investment Authority.

5.0 Conclusion

It is impractical to pursue a sustainable industrialization policy without providing environmental authorities with the first call for industrial decisions. Therefore, the government should align policies that allow environmental decisions to take precedence over industrial decisions to achieve sustainable industrial growth.

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Efficacy Methodology Limited

P. O. Box 102888, Kampala

Plot 2388, Namanve, Jinja Road

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