

# Peasants in Uganda

By Sam Okello

Uganda is one of the smallest cast African countries. It is a land locked country. Its neighbouring countries are Kenya, Tanzania, Rwanda, Zaire and Sudan. Uganda was once known as the "Pearl of Africa" because it has potentially fertile soil and an excellent climate. There is an abundance of water and power supplies. There is also considerable mineral wealth such as copper, cobalt, tin and wolfram. Uganda has great tourist possibilities; and, above all, a clever, educated people.

There are several reasons why Uganda is not regarded as one of the wealthy nations in the world. The major reason is that peasants in Uganda have been exploited. Looking back at the colonial legacy, there were two major forms of integration of peasants into the colonial imperialist economy of Uganda. In every region of Uganda, there was an area which was turned into a cheap labour reserve. This meant the migrant labour system, whereby the wife remained a peasant at home producing food in the village. The husband migrated as a worker to a plantation. He was employed only part-time. The rest of the year, he returned to his home in the village. At home, he lived off the food cultivated by the wife.

The other form of integration was whereby an area was turned into a reserve of cheap raw materials. Considering the above system, this meant that the wife would produce cheap food while the husband would go out to look for cheap labour. Whatever labour the peasant produced, it was regarded as cheap. Because the wife produced food and the husband produced an export crop, there was a cheap raw material reserve. It was cheap because the family produced its own food. The cash which the family got from selling cotton or coffee was used only to pay tax and to buy a few manufactured necessities. This led to an exploitation of peasants. It also caused poverty, sorrow and misery.

Unfortunately, the whole system of cheap raw material production has been going onto the present day. This system has two conditions. First, the labour meets a substantial part of its own food cost. Second, the labour remains the major input production, or to put it a different way, that the technological base still remains low.

As a result, there has been exploitation of peasants in Uganda. The peasant is essentially trapped in two main types of exploitation. First, he is exploited through unequal market relations where he

sells cheap and buys expensive.

This is monopoly exploitation, whether by state or private agencies. For instance, Millet, a staple food in Uganda, is sold cheaply in the village. The same Millet is sold Kampala, the capital city, at sky rocket prices. The peasant, who is in this case the Millet producer in the village, gets barely a quarter of the final price. According to my own observation the cash which the peasant gets per day is approximately \$10.

Likewise, the coffee plantation owner in southern Uganda gets a small amount from the coffee trade compared to what the government gets in the world market for the same coffee. The coffee producer is exploited too. This is why a simple shift from export crop (Coffee) to food crop (Millet) production does not mean a major difference to the peasant. In Uganda it is easy to predict the climate but it is very difficult to predict the market for cheap labour. Therefore, the small producer sees the market as more unpredictable and less friendly than the climate.

However, the first type of exploitation of the peasant is indirect. This is a result of the dull compulsion of economic forces. The second type of exploitation is direct through the use of force by the state or the church. For example, in eastern Uganda,

people are urged by the government to grow coffee (a cash crop) although most of them may be unwilling to produce Coffee because of the low income that they get out of it. This forced labour amounts to as much as a quarter of the peasant's total labour in certain villages. This form of forced crop production is usually meant for export by the government. There are also forced cash contributions to the party or the church.

As a result, the peasant operates with a permanent handicap because his surplus product is regularly siphoned off. His cash income is hardly enough to meet immediate requirements such as paying taxes, replacing a hoe or buying some salt or medicine. It is expensive for peasants to buy essential commodities like sugar, salt and soap.

There is no way for a peasant's life to be improved under the present system. There are always limitations because a peasant is forced to begin the production cycle each time with roughly the same or even a worse technical base than the previous time around.

Peasant exploitation has been in Uganda since the colonial period. It has continued through government, the Amin period and the present regime. This has led the peasant to regard changes in

regimes as storms in the political sky, yet the hard realities on the ground remain unchanged.

Uganda is no longer the "pearl of Africa". The government is taking away most of the money from the peasant. This has led to an exploitation of the peasants. People are poor.

In my opinion, a peasant in Uganda must be protected from exploitation. Labour should not be maimed and shackled by administrative coercion. The peasant should be provided with better technology. This will improve the Gross National Product. The peasant should be paid adequate money for his labour. The peasant will then be able to meet basic demands such as soap, salt, sugar,

medicine; to mention only a few. Uganda needs better economic planners. It also needs competent rulers who are willing to work for the better interests of its people. If all this is achieved, there will be prosperity. There will be better economic development. The land will be filled with "milk and honey" and it will shine. Uganda will be once again called the "Pearl of Africa."

## Employment Centre

There is no magical formula. But there are jobs out there. The knowledgeable job hunter is infinitely more likely to be the one who finds those jobs than the ignorant job hunter. The more you know about the job-hunt and how it functions the more you increase your chances.

Are you really ready to take job-hunting seriously? Are you a persistent enthusiastic job hunter? The enthusiastic job-hunter is infinitely more likely to be the one who finds a job than the matter-of-fact job hunter. The more you've identified a job you'd really love to do, and know what things are your great *enthusiasms*, the more you increase your chances of finding a job — particularly when jobs are scarce.

- It is always good to have both a Plan A and a Plan B.
- Work and leisure cannot be kept entirely separate and independent either another.
- Post-secondary education or a degree do not guarantee you a job.
- A "career" is not something

only professionals have.

- Skills are "something everybody has 700 of".
- Aptitude and interest tests only give you more information — they will not tell you what you should be doing.
- There is no "one" perfect job for each person and no guarantee that the job will continue to be perfect for their lifetime.
- Adults don't always know exactly either what they want by the time they finish school, turn 21, get married, etc.
- You will not like a certain occupation just because a friend or relative does.
- In a true sense, everyone "creates" their own job.
- All a job rejection means is that that particular employer did not need your particular skills at that particular time. It is not a rejection of you as a person.
- Use as many different methods as you can.
- As much as you physically can go face-to-face with people

rather than inserting a piece of paper between you and them.

- All you learn from your mistakes is what NOT to do. They do not necessarily tell you what to do.
- A new career, correctly planned, will use more of your recognized talents and skills enabling you to do a better job and be worth more to your employer.
- A career is not built on what's good out there, but on what's good in you.
- No one can tell you what you should do. Only YOU can make the proper career decision.
- Far more people are hired because the interviewer likes them rather than because they are best qualified.
- Purposefulness is more powerful than aggressiveness.
- Resumes don't get people jobs; people get jobs. No one ever hired a piece of paper.
- The appearance of a resume says a lot more about you than what it says.

- The primary purpose of personnel departments is to screen you, not hire you. Only your prospective supervisor can really do that.
- Be prepared to spend as much time job-hunting as you would if you were employed. That is, at least 40 hours a week or even more.
- CHOOSE YOUR WORK — don't let the job choose you.
- There are lots of people looking for a job, but very few looking for WORK!
- You must realize that no one owes you a job.
- Your skills (and the results) are the KEY to your employability.
- People hire people they know. Employers only "go outside" to newspapers, etc. when they can't hire someone they already know and trust.
- The good jobs go to the good people before the general public ever knows about them ... if, indeed, they ever know about them.

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