PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT PLANNING OF THE ALBERTINE GRABEN REGION

The Albertine Graben is one of Uganda’s most important and dynamic regions. The emergence of a new petroleum industry, combined with its prime role in Uganda’s tourism sector, important agricultural production and strategic location sharing borders with Rwanda, DRC and S. Sudan are all reasons prompting preparation of the country’s first Regional Physical Development Plan (PDP). The Albertine Graben PDP:

“Provides a physical development planning framework to promote and guide the development process in the Albertine Graben in a sustainable manner through preparation of a 25 year integrated Physical Development Plan.”

The Albertine Graben PDP gains its overall guidance from Uganda’s Vision 2040 and National Development Plan. Albertine Graben Region includes 25% (68,000 km2) of Uganda’s land, 25% of its population, produces 30% of the nation’s food crops, accounts for over 70% of the country’s tourism revenue and contains an estimated 6.5 billion barrels of oil destined to boost Uganda’s economy for the next 25 years or more.

The Albertine also contains some of the country’s and region’s most valued and varied landscapes including a number of world-class national parks and wildlife populations, major Rift Valley lakes, a section of the Nile River and the spectacular Rwenzori Mountains.

As a Regional Development Plan, the Albertine Physical Development Plan is the first of a series of Regional Physical Development Plans that will fall under a future National Physical Development Plan. It is also the guiding framework for urgently needed District Plans that begin to fill in specific development details, and, in turn, serve as the integrating framework for supporting Local Government Plans - Municipal, Town Council and others.

Sector Strategies

The Albertine Physical Development Plan comprises a series of individual Sector Development Strategies, each with their own physical development requirements and impacts, and each requiring integration with the others:

Institutional Development Strategy: focuses on the supporting Physical Planning and Land Management actions required to see PDP recommendations implemented beginning with preparation of priority District Development Plans for Nwoya, Hoima and Bulisa Districts. Priority Local Government and Special Development Zone Plans are also identified.

Socio-Cultural Development Strategy: receives priority attention since it is the health, education and general well-being of the Albertine’s residents that will ultimately determine its future. At least 14 major ethnic groups contribute to the Albertine’s cultural mix with their customary land tenure systems, settlement patterns and economic practices. The PDP outlines Regional requirements for safeguarding cultural heritage while developing much needed higher-level educational and health facilities catering to a population that is projected to grow from the current 9 million to 18 million during the Planning Period.
Economic Development Strategies: A major role of the PDP is to set out requirements for infrastructure, land management, environmental management and sustainability actions to guide the Region’s transition from a largely subsistence-based economy to an industrialised one. Support is provided to traditional economic sectors of Agriculture (always the economic base), Forestry, Fishing; the important growth potential of Tourism; the emerging petroleum and mining sectors; and the needs of increased industrialisation including ICT.

- **Agriculture:** supports the needed and inevitable transition from subsistence to Commercial with supporting transport and energy infrastructure for agro-processing and central storage and market facilities in urban centres.
- **Forestry:** reverse the rapid degradation of “protected areas”, reforest and afforest to Vision 2040’s goal of 24% coverage with a combination of indigenous and commercial.
- **Fishing:** recognized as a limited and fragile industry requiring serious natural resource management to sustain.
- **Tourism:** a potential long-term growth industry, but only if the underlying eco-attraits are safeguarded from short-term exploitation and degradation. Expand to include valued and numerous community cultural/historic heritage assets.
- **Mining:** known, but largely undeveloped concentrations in the south and Kasese regions with industrialisation potential supported by Northern Corridor infrastructure and local hydro potentials.
- **Oil and Gas:** significant potential to contribute to Albertine and national growth over the next 2-3 decades if the resource is well managed and the “oil curse” experienced elsewhere on the continent can be avoided. Managing the wide range of company, government and community expectations against the realities is a major challenge. Essential to safeguard long-term sustainability of other sectors while developing this relatively short-term opportunity. The PDP emphasises the urgent need for detailed District Plans (Hoima and Bulisa) to integrate industry, community and regional needs.
- **Manufacturing/Industrialisation:** an important direction to achieve Vision 2040 and supported by many PDP initiatives discussed throughout. Political will, an improved national “ease-of-doing-business” environment, Development Control, detailed plans, supporting infrastructure will all contribute.
- **ICT:** expanded and strengthened throughout the Albertine as critical to globalised economic development. Largely a private sector activity relying again on a favourable “ease-of-doing-business” environment. Centres such as Fort Portal have the potential to also develop their own ICT industries, particularly in the software and consultants aspects.

**Settlement and Urbanisation:** Urban areas are a region’s economic, social and governance centres. They also generate the vast majority of a region’s environmental impacts. The PDP pays particular attention to the planning and development of the Albertine’s urban centres starting with a strong condemnation of the current lack of Development Control with the resultant unsustainable and uncontrolled settlement sprawl. This must be halted to allow the orderly provision of urban services, protect agricultural lands, halt and reverse endemic encroachment into forests and wetlands, and allow urban areas to sustainably accommodate a population that will expand from the current 15% of the Albertine’s total to 50% by 2040.
Infrastructure Strategies: After Institutional Capacities and Land Use Management, infrastructure - transport, energy, water, ICT and other urban services - is undoubtedly the key ingredient to economic and social development. Various government agencies all have their individual detailed plans for pieces of infrastructure development, and their own investment priorities. The PDP does not usurp these plans and generally accepts them, but attempts to integrate them, add suggested missing pieces, and prioritise to meet a diverse set of Regional agendas from the peasant farmer on up. The Albertine PDP:

- supports the national objective to develop “Infrastructure Corridors” to consolidate networks and reduce impacts;
- builds on the vision of a National Ring Road to link urban centres, expedite trade and expand tourism potential;
- takes advantage of the regionally proposed Northern Corridor to further industrialise the south;
- proposes a Northern Loop Road to better link West Nile to the rest of the country and support increasing trade opportunities with DRC and S. Sudan;
- reinstates safe and reliable marine transport on L. Albert linking West Nile to the central and southern Albertine from a new multi-modal transport hub in Pakwach;
- anticipates new hydro power developments and transmission lines to fuel industrial growth, but also cautions about environmental impacts;
- recognizes that sustainable water sources are scarce and that strict management of the water resources that do exist will be the key to ensuring future supplies;

- supports expansion and strengthening of ICT, largely by the private sector, as both an essential piece of infrastructure in a globalised economy, and also as a potential industry of its own;
- acknowledges the need for a network of petroleum pipelines for raw and refined materials.

Environmental and Natural Resource Management: clearly recognized as the foundation of the social and economic future of the Albertine and all other regions. The PDP emphasises the urgency of reversing Uganda’s rapid loss of essential natural resources and environmental assets through a lack of political will, development control and a penchant for giving priority to short-term gain versus long-term sustainability. Prioritised developments are identified in this Final Proposed PDP along with environmental scoping.

More Milestones

Furthermore the Ministry of has developed Physical Development Plans for the 3 selected towns/areas within the Graben that is; Bulisa Town, Butyaba, and Sebigoro. Drafts of the Structure Plan and the seven detailed plans have also been prepared and are on a display for public input. The Physical Development Plans are for areas around the proposed refinery in Buseruka Sub County include Buseruka, Nyamasoga, Kabale, Kataaba, Kaseeta, Kigaga and Kigoma growth centres.
Arrangements to plan Kaiso, Buhuka, Panyamuru urban growth centres and Nebbi Town Council are underway with support from Norwegian Government under Oil for Development OFD and Government of Uganda resources.

Further Identification of potential growth centers within the graben has been done for closer monitoring and supervision, the Ministry intends to effectively step up the monitoring of activities within the region to ensure compliance to land use regulatory framework.