Carbon Violence: The Darker Side of Green FAQs
The Oakland Institute, November 2014

What is "carbon violence"?

"Carbon violence" refers to violence occurring in the growing global "green economy," including specifically carbon market initiatives.

The word "carbon" refers to carbon offset projects, in this case tree plantations, which are designed to capture or sequester carbon, thereby compensating for greenhouse gas emissions. Establishing and managing these projects has become a profitable industry, and, in response, a number of profit-seeking companies have been formed to participate in the broader global "green economy." Many of the carbon-offset projects are implemented in developing countries.

These projects can be costly to local communities and people in a variety of ways; this report examines effects on people who live (or lived) on or use land that has been acquired for these sorts of carbon-offset projects. While the violence experienced by these people isn't always necessarily in the form of physical harm, the term *violence* is understood more broadly to describe diverse experiences of direct and structural forms of violence, such as intimidation, forced eviction, loss of livelihood, restricted access to important sites, chemical pollution, and the imposition of jail terms and fines.

What is the "green economy"?

The "green economy" describes a broad suite of mechanisms that are designed to respond to climate change and other environmental challenges through market-based schemes. These mechanisms can be established at a local, domestic, or international level, and range from investing in renewable energy and sustainable transport to participating in carbon trading schemes, such as carbon offsets. There is a rising engagement with the green economy across the private sector, as environmental concerns are increasingly included within the broader framework of corporate social responsibility. The growth of the "green economy" has also seen the establishment of whole "green markets," such as the global carbon trading market, and the formation of private corporations like the Norwegian company Green Resources, whose business is entirely rooted in profit-seeking green market mechanisms.

Many see the "green economy" as an effective way to tackle climate change *without* compromising economic growth, thereby providing a "win-win-win" solution for the environment, the economy, and society. However, critics argue that the
"green economy" is at best an ineffective way of tackling the climate crisis, which many believe has its roots in the private market system itself, and at worst a means by

which land and resources become vulnerable to new forms of corporate control and profit-driven "grabs."

What is the "carbon market"?

The "carbon market" describes the domestic and international trade of greenhouse gas emissions, specifically carbon dioxide, as a means to monitor and limit the amount of carbon emitted at the global level.

Emissions trading schemes come into being when a central regulatory body places a cap on the amount of emissions that may be made by emitters. An emitter is usually considered to be a private company, but, in some cases, emissions are also traded between nations. In the case of carbon emissions, this global regulation was initially and primarily linked to the Kyoto Protocol, although other regulatory bodies have since been established. The standard unit of measurement for carbon emissions is equal to one metric ton of carbon dioxide. Each of these units represents a "permit," or "carbon credit."

Under these regulations, each emitter entity is allowed a certain number of carbon credits, which is limited by the cap. If an entity seeks to increase its emissions beyond this cap, it must first obtain more carbon credits. The carbon market allows an emitter to buy extra carbon credits from another entity that is emitting *below* its cap, and therefore has credits in surplus. Alternatively, an emitter might gain extra credits by purchasing carbon offsets, which, through a variety of mechanisms, aim to actively reduce the amount of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere.

What are carbon offsets and how do they work?

The term *carbon offset* describes a multilateral attempt to regulate the amount of greenhouse gases that are being emitted at a global level. Within this broad framework there are a whole range of different ways in which states and companies try to reduce the amount of greenhouse gases, particularly carbon dioxide, emitted in one part of the world in order to compensate for emissions made elsewhere. The theory is that a reduction in emissions in one place should balance out continued emissions in a different place, so that the net global level of emissions will fall.

Carbon offsetting typically means committing financial support to a project that aims to reduce global net greenhouse gas emissions. Such projects are numerous and diverse, and include the development of renewable energy sources and energy efficiency measures; the containment and combustion of methane; forest preservation, reforestation, and afforestation (tree plantations); and purchasing carbon credits from emissions trading schemes.

How do tree plantations work as a form of carbon offsetting?

Trees naturally sequester (or absorb) carbon dioxide. As such, many carbon offsetting projects focus on preserving existing forests, planting trees to "reforest" areas that

were formerly forested, or "afforesting" previously unforested land. To secure land for these sorts of projects, large areas are acquired by or licensed to a company, NGO, or government body, and in turn preserved or planted.

There are concerns regarding the efficacy of tree plantations as carbon offsets and the practice of "future-selling" carbon offsets by predicting how much carbon will be captured by a plantation over time. This is often based on assumptions that the plantation will exist in the long term, which is impossible to guarantee. If trees die, rot, or are cut down, they release their carbon stores back into the atmosphere. It is extremely difficult to accurately calculate the amount of carbon that is actually sequestered by tree plantations in the first place, particularly given that not all trees survive to maturity. These predictions are therefore often criticised as being too imprecise to guarantee a significant, positive environmental difference. In addition, many tree-planting projects use fast-growing, non-native species, and are often planted in monoculture stands. These invasive species often bring environmental problems of their own, such as habitat loss for native wildlife populations and reduced biodiversity.

Some tree plantations have taken a high toll on indigenous or local peoples' rights. There are many documented cases in which people have been displaced or been excluded from using land and natural resources to make way for the purchase/licence, planting, and policing of land used for carbon offset plantations. Several of the most well-known cases have occurred in Uganda (including the UK-based New Forest Company), and there have been similar reports from other parts of Africa, Central and South America, and India.

Who is Green Resources and how is the company involved in carbon offsetting?

Green Resources is a privately-held Norwegian company that was incorporated in 1995. Its business is entirely based around forestry, including plantations, wood products, carbon offset schemes, and renewable energy. The company's website claims it is the largest forestation company in Africa, adding that it has "probably planted more forest than any other private organization in Africa in the last ten years." Green Resources currently owns and manages 41,000 hectares of "standing forest" in Mozambique, Tanzania, and Uganda, and has a further 300,000 hectares of land set to be used for planting and conservation projects in the future.

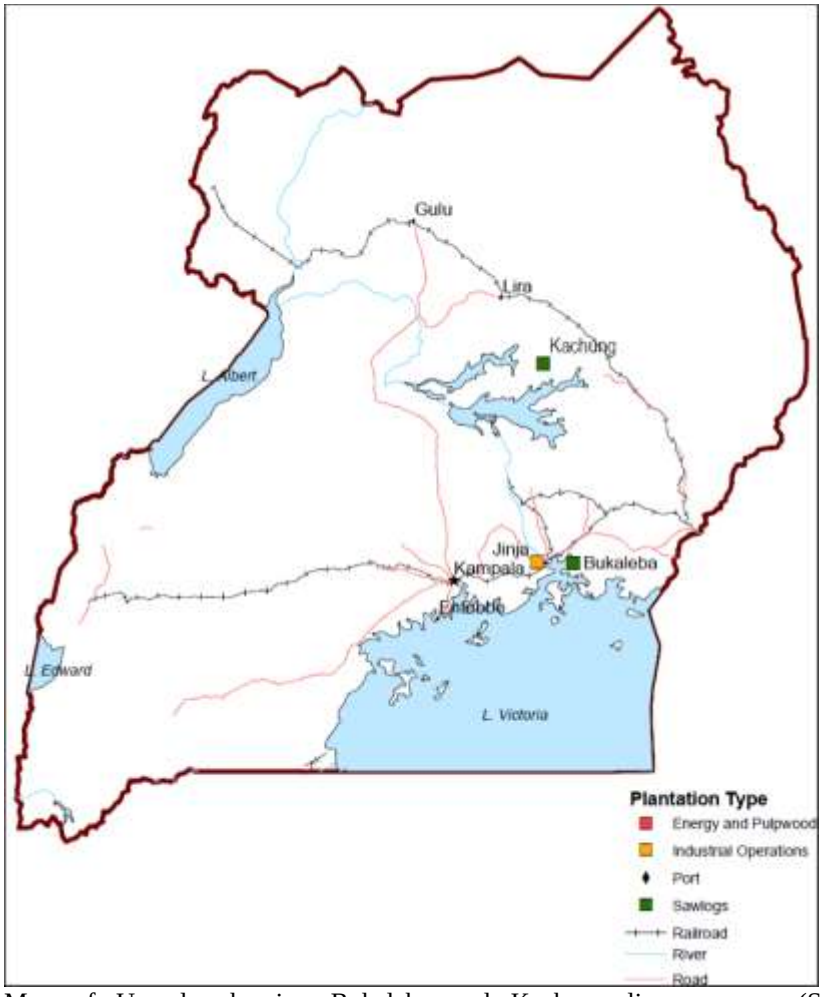
Green Resources is an example of a company acting within the framework of the "green economy," as it claims to work toward the multiple goals of growing, harvesting, and selling forest products from responsibly managed plantations, while also making a positive contribution to long-term environmental sustainability, community development, and the alleviation of poverty. The company's website emphasizes an environmental ethos, citing that "the company only harvests plantation forest, plants at least ten new trees for every one tree that it harvests, and only plants on low value grassland or degraded forestland."

Green Resources claims to be a leader in forestry-based carbon offset schemes, in which it reforests or afforests formerly "degraded" land in order to create carbon

sinks. Though there are many categories of carbon offset projects, such as REDD+, the Clean Development Mechanism, and Voluntary Carbon Markets, Green Resources' activities fall under the latter two. Green Resources' Ugandan sites provide carbon offsets that are validated respectively under the Verified Carbon Standard (Bukaleba) and the Climate, Community & Biodiversity Alliance (Kachung). The Kachung project is recognized as a Clean Development Mechanism (CDM) project, which is a form of carbon trading mechanism defined by the Kyoto Protocol.

How much land is now held by Green Resources in Uganda and where is it located?

Green Resources holds land in two sites in Uganda. The first, at Bukaleba in the Mayuge District in eastern Uganda, covers a total of 9,165 hectares and includes 5,780 hectares for a reforestation site and 3,385 hectares for conservation. The second, at Kachung in the Dokolo District in northern Uganda, comprises 2,669 hectares, of which 2,099 hectares is for afforestation. The company's website states that, "Both plantations have been established within government-owned Central Forest Reserves that have been set aside for forest plantations."



Map of Uganda showing Bukaleba and Kachung license areas (Source: Green Resources, http://www.greenresources.no/Plantations/Uganda.aspx, accessed August 11, 2014)

How did Green Resources acquire this land?

Ugandan land has been increasingly subject to privatisation since the 1990s as part of a national strategy to attract foreign investment. Officials of certain Ugandan government bodies--the National Forestry Authority (NFA) and the National Environmental Management Authority (NEMA)--have described partnerships with foreign private investors as key to environmental sustainability and the proliferation and conservation of forests, as well as community development in Uganda. As such, the Ugandan government has increasingly invited foreign private companies, especially those with agendas that align with the broader "green economy," to purchase Ugandan land. However, some Ugandan community leaders have voiced concerns about the foreign private sector investing in land, emphasising that foreign investment must provide benefits for local people as well as the investor.

Green Resources is essentially renting land from the Ugandan government, having obtained licences from the National Forestry Authority (NFA) to establish and manage plantation projects in Bulakeba Forest Reserve in 1996, and Kachung Forest Reserve in 1999. Both sites had been designated by the NFA as "degraded" land, available for reforestation, afforestation, and conservation.

Finance companies and investors are increasingly looking to land and forestry as good investment opportunities. This has led to the growth in funding available for international land acquisitions--usually of rural land, and often in developing countries. Green Resources is connected to this phenomenon as the recipient of funding from large financiers looking to invest in this sector.

How are people in Uganda affected by Green Resources' presence?

There is a lack of information about how many people are directly affected by Green Resources' presence in Uganda; estimates range between 8,000 and 40,000 people.

There are 4 villages located inside the Bukaleba site and at least 12 adjacent to it. There are 14 villages adjacent to the Kachung site, but none inside it.

Villagers across Green Resources' two acquisitions in Uganda, at Bukaleba and Kachung Central Forest Reserves, report being denied access to land vital for growing food and grazing livestock as well as collecting forest resources crucial for their livelihoods. Many also describe the pollution of land and waterways by agrochemicals used in corporate forestry plantations, resulting in crop losses and livestock deaths. Many of those evicted, as well as those seeking to use land now licensed to Green Resources, report being subjected to physical violence at the hands of the police. They also allege that private security forces have been involved in this criminal behavior, although the role of Green Resources itself is not known.

Is this happening in other parts of the world as well?

Unfortunately, there are many documented cases of the displacement and exclusion of local people in order to make way for international carbon investments in land. Two relatively well-known cases have taken place in Uganda--including one at Mount Elgon, as reported by the World Rainforest Movement, and another that was reported by Oxfam International in 2011, in which over 20,000 Ugandan farmers were displaced for a plantation operated by London-based New Forests Company.

Looking further around the world, there are a number of similar cases. In Brazil's Atlantic Forest, local people have been excluded from using their traditional lands, resulting in several cases of criminal charges and incarceration, to make way for a carbon offset project run by the US-based Nature Conservancy.[1] A number of other cases have been reported in Brazil, as well as REDD+ projects displacing local populations in Kenya, Congo, Papua New Guinea, and other locations,[2] and Clean Development Mechanism schemes have reportedly affected communities' use of lands at several sites across India.[3]

[1] http://www.motherjones.com/environment/2009/11/gms-money-trees
[2] http://www.carbontradewatch.org/issues/redd.html
[3] http://wrm.org.uy/es/articulos-del-boletin-wrm/seccion5/india-ravaged-landscape-devastated-people-tales-of-hydro-power-cdm-projects-in-himachal-pradesh/