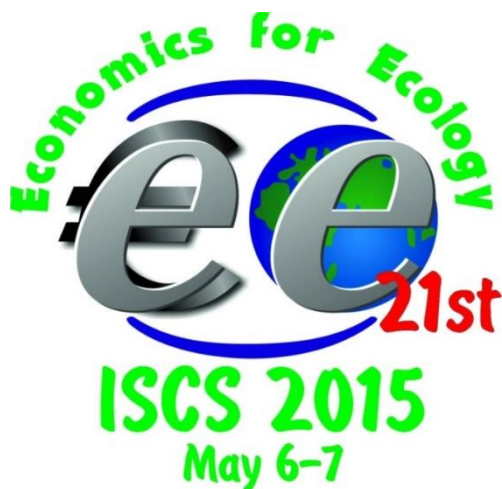


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CAUSES OF LAND DEGRADATION IN TANZANIA

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Land degradation is a process in which the value of the biophysical environment is affected by a combination of human-induced processes acting upon the land.

It has been a top ranked environmental problem before and after Independence of Tanzania. Despite the government's commitment to solving land degradation problems; still it affects the majority of people especially in dry land areas.

Land degradation (see figure 1) is directly related to the following aspects; population and poverty in the sense that population increases yearly forcing people to expand their farming and economical activities hence this refers to increasing pressure of population on land, resulting in small farms, low production per person and increasing landlessness. A consequence of land shortage is the next element, poverty.

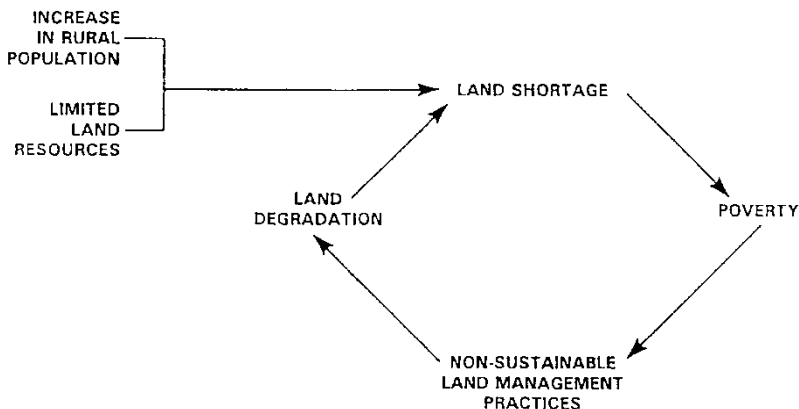


Figure 1 - Consequences of non-sustainable land-management

The main causes of land degradation are mainly natural disasters and human made or manmade disasters. Some of the main causes of land degradation in Tanzania include:

- **Deforestation.** Tanzania is a developing country and

depends on agriculture as one of the main economic activities hence in a way or another there have been an increase in cutting down of trees due to the increasing demand of timber, fuel and forest products in order to support the economy of the country. The main problem facing Tanzanian forests is the charcoal burning.

□ **Overgrazing.** In most Tanzanian villages, villagers see livestock as a sign of wealth, and would like to maximize their herd size for their own social, cultural, and economic reasons. This perception tends to encourage overgrazing and land degradation.

□ **Mining and quarrying.** Using of some explosives and the deep digging of the earth in order to extract sand, ore and other valuable minerals leaves the land bare and without cover hence encouraging degradation and Tanzania being a country rich in minerals suffers a great deal, affected areas include Geita, Nyamongolo and Kahama among other areas where mining takes place.

□ **Population.** We can say this is the major cause of land degradation as the population increases there is need for more land for agricultural activities and also land for settlement of the extra population, and in turn it leads to clearing of forests hence land degradation.

Apart from the above we can also say that other causes of land degradation include; agricultural depletion of soil nutrients through poor farming practices, inappropriate irrigation, soil, vehicle off-road driving, quarrying of stone, sand, ore and minerals, increase in field size due to economies of scale, reducing shelter for wildlife, as hedgerows and copses disappear, exposure of naked soil after harvesting by heavy equipment, monoculture, destabilizing the local ecosystem and dumping of non-biodegradable trash, such as plastics

In order to counter the ever growing effects of land degradation we need to put in place some measures which will help support a sustainable development of the nation and the world at large. And also educate the people on sustainability of environment which will help eradicate land degradation at large.