

## *Innocent Batamuriza, Solar Connect Association, Uganda*

### Introduction

First of all I would like to thank Barbara Gemmill and Jessica Dempsey from the ELCI and Laurent Ntahuga for giving such an opportunity to come to Kuala Lumpur to the CBD – my first international CBD meeting.

During my participation in the GBF-19 and the COP-7 I learned about and began to understand many issues and concerns about the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity and in particular how policy making at the global level is developed. Also, I had excellent opportunities to network with other NGOs, research institutions and local community groups and indigenous and mobile peoples' representatives. Indeed, as a pastoralist myself, I found the latter groups very open and supportive and thus I participated in many of their interesting meetings. The Mobile Peoples Alliance has indeed invited me to join the network and therefore I am taking this kind of invitation back to my peoples for consultation.

### What I learnt from my participation in the GBF and COP?

#### *Thematic Areas:*

One of the important issues I learnt was about Access to Genetic Resources and Benefit Sharing and the debate surrounding traditional knowledge and biopiracy. I learned how countries are developing legislation to facilitate access without considering much the rights of local communities. I am not aware how this issue is being dealt with in Uganda but I will research and inform the communities I work with.

Another theme that interested me was the negotiations on Technology Transfer. I believe that little attention is being put on local and low-input technologies such as solar energy. I, by my experience, in working with rural women in Uganda know how helpful solar technologies can be. I would like to continue to follow this issue to be able to contribute from a community perspective.

Agricultural biodiversity was another issue that was brought to my attention. Particularly I was very impressed by the debates about the role of small farmers and pastoralists in conservation and sustainable use of agrobiodiversity. As a pastoralist and knowledgeable about animal biodiversity and the role of women on animal breeding I feel that I can contribute to this debate.

Article 8(j) and related provisions was another theme that was new to me and on which I spend much time trying to learn and get involved in the debate. I attended various meetings of the Indigenous Peoples Forum on Biodiversity and also of the Mobile Peoples Alliance to learn more about these issues which are very close to my heart.

The conservation and protection of traditional knowledge should also be a theme that the NGO Network on Biodiversity should take more seriously. I have not seen much debate about it in spite that many of the NGOs are from countries rich on traditional knowledge.

Education and Public Awareness also interested me. However the debate was focused more on formal systems and gave little attention to models we use in the rural areas. These activities should also be advanced in Uganda where we need to protect our forests which are being cut at an alarming rate. I am interested in the links between forest protection and education and awareness through the promotion of solar technologies.

I also attended various side-events on many topics. One that was very eye opening was the topic of the privatization of life. Incentive Measures was another topic discussed. It was difficult to understand the issues as there was little links with real life situations like those that happen at the community level.

#### *Networking:*

Through the meeting I have been able to be in contact with so many people from different countries and organizations. Some of them had a lot to share in terms of solar technologies and their use to protect forests. I had exchange ideas on how my Association could improve its work and activities on solar technologies and I will continue in touch with these experts to continue my discussions.

I have had also chance of meeting many indigenous peoples in the IIFB and share with them my experiences as a pastoralist. I also meet the Mobile Peoples Alliance and they have invited me to join their Network to see how Uganda pastoralists could be more involved in this movement. I will take this invitation to my people and see how we can participate of this exciting network.

#### **Conclusions and Recommendations**

I have learnt a great deal and I am taking with me many documents and contact information to support my future work. However, I must confess that because this was my first time I felt lost at times as the issues were complex and wide. Though the NGO meeting was helpful it would be very useful if the new NGOs could have an introduction to the themes and guidance in their immersion in a complex political process such as the CBD. There are people with so much experience in the process and many of us which were newcomers would like to learn from their expertise.

Finally, I would like to continue my participation in the CBD and related meetings to gain experience and expertise to share it with my colleagues in Uganda and my people at the community level. There are so many issues which relate to my work as a Ugandan and as a woman and I would like to bring to the process issues and concerns which are important to the communities I work with.

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