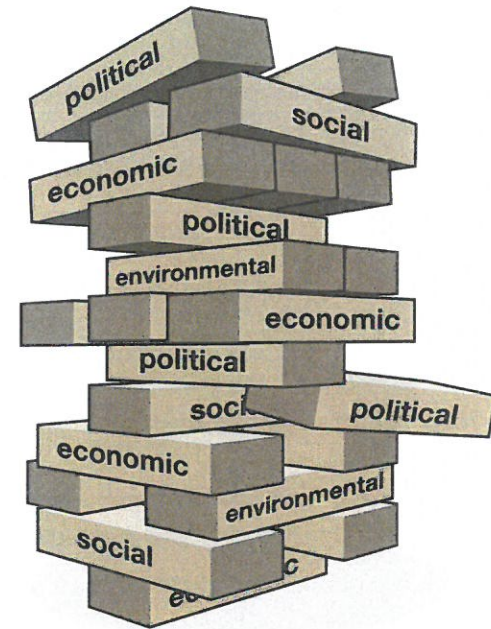


In this section you will learn about issues associated with unequal flows of people, money, ideas and technology in Uganda

You may have played the game shown in Figure 1. It involves removing a brick from a tall stack and then placing it at the top of the pile. A wise move will allow the stack to grow taller whilst keeping solid foundations below. As the game continues and the stack of bricks grows taller, more risks have to be taken and eventually the blocks tumble. Global systems are certainly no game, but there are winners and losers. Look again at Figure 1, 1.1 – such is the interdependence of global systems that any ‘tumble’ might have an impact globally.



**Figure 1** As represented by this brick-stacking game, expanding global systems are part of the same whole. Economic, political, social and environmental ‘bricks’ are all dependent on each other for support – a weakness or wobble in one may lead to the collapse of others.

### Think about

#### The British Empire

The origins of the British Empire can be traced as far back as the fifteenth century when English seamen sailed and traded all over the world. English colonies were subsequently formed in America (late 1500s), West Indies (1620s) and Canada (1760s). Between 1815 and 1914, 10 million square miles of territory and 400 million people were added to the British Empire, including India and colonies across Africa (Uganda was made a colony in 1894). The British way of life – government, laws and religion – was imposed, sometimes by force, and national economies ‘served’ the needs of the Empire. It was not until after the Second World War that the British Empire was dismantled and replaced by a voluntary organisation of former colonies called the Commonwealth.

#### Uganda and global systems

Uganda is a land-locked country in East Africa that lies within the Nile basin (Figure 2). Uganda shouldn’t be a poor country – it is green and fertile, and has plenty of resources such as copper and cobalt.

However, civil war, corruption and HIV/AIDS have all acted as checks to development. Nearly one-third of the 35 million population live below the national poverty line and, of the many indicators of development, life expectancy stands out – it is only 59 years.

In this context, have global systems worked for or against the interests of Uganda and its people?



**Figure 2** Uganda – a developing country affected by global systems

#### Inequalities and injustices

Poverty in Uganda is greatest in rural areas, particularly in the north and north-east where the majority of the population are smallholder subsistence farmers. When Uganda was part of the British Empire, the British East Africa Company strongly influenced the country’s exports. Low-valued primary products such as the cash crops of coffee, tea and cotton were exported around the Empire and they continue to dominate Ugandan exports.

However, fish is now a traditional food staple for Ugandans living on the shore of Lake Victoria, and is one of the country’s most profitable exports. This trade is unsustainable (Figure 3). Overfishing and the predatory Nile Perch (introduced by the British) have resulted in stocks of indigenous fish being reduced to extinction levels. This in turn has caused fish factories to close and an associated knock-on effect to the local economy.



**Figure 3** Overfishing in Lake Victoria is causing significant environmental and economic damage

#### Stability, growth and development

Shambas, the smallholdings owned by subsistence farmers, are an unlikely location to see the positive effects of global systems. Against a traditional backdrop of coffee bushes and banana and yam plants, occasional mobile phone antennae on the tops of farm buildings are evidence of recent technological changes.

The installation of fixed cables in Uganda is cost prohibitive, but cheap wireless technology now means that telephony and particularly access to the internet is possible even in remote rural areas. The so-called ‘Village Phone’ model offers loans to people wishing to start a mobile phone business (Figure 4). The loan allows the purchase of a mobile (and increasingly smart) phone, a car battery to charge it and a booster antenna that can pick up signals from 25 km away. There is a rapidly growing market of users who are willing to pay for this mobile phone service – for example, farmers pay to access the internet and to gain information about the price they might pay for seeds at market or information on new farming techniques.



**Figure 4** The Village Phone model

#### Did you know?

There are around 700 million mobile phone subscriptions in sub-Saharan Africa.

#### ACTIVITIES

- 1 Evaluate the effects of unequal flows of people, money, ideas and technology on global systems on Uganda. (Hint: consider stability, growth, development, inequalities, conflicts and injustices.)
- 2 Making reference to a named country, focus on two aspects and assess whether there were benefits of being part of the British Empire for that country. (Aspects could be, for example, infrastructure, investment, public health.)

#### STRETCH YOURSELF

Uganda gained independence from Great Britain in 1962. Assess whether independence brought greater political stability. You could compare the three periods: 1962–71, 1971–79 and 1979 to the present day. You may find online resources to be useful (such as [www.nationsencyclopedia.com](http://www.nationsencyclopedia.com)).