

COMMUNITIES



INTRODUCTION

he world is deeply polarised today. On one side, climate scientists, activists, women, and youth want world leaders to take urgent climate action, including halting the opening of new coal, oil, and gas fields. On the other side, proponents of oil and gas remain optimistic about expanding and exploring fossil fuels, arguing that these actions are essential for national prosperity and stability.

Then there are the warnings from climate scientists, who assert that to avoid the unforgiving impacts of the changing climate, no new fossil fuel projects should be developed and operationalised.

Despite these warnings, some African governments maintain that new oil and gas development is key to addressing the twin challenges of economic and energy poverty.

But what about oil-host communities? Does development of oil and gas fields spur economic development for them?

In this booklet, we present stories of oil-host communities from Western and Southern Uganda. Here, oil projects, such as the Tilenga, Kingfisher and the East African Crude Oil Pipeline (EACOP), are currently being developed under a formidable partnership between TotalEnergies, China National Offshore Oil Corporation (CNOOC), and the Ugandan government.

The featured stories reflect the harsh reality faced by communities in these regions. Far from the promises of prosperity tied to the oil developments, these communities struggle with hardship that permeates every aspect of their social fabric.

The dreams of economic uplift from oil development have not materialised. Instead, families have been left shattered and struggling.





ROSE ALINATIWE, 41, BULIISA DISTRICT

n July 13, 2005, my husband and I were united in marriage. I imagined a life of happiness, and from 2005 to 2018, I lived that dream.

But in 2018, everything changed. At the time, I had no idea that the events unfolding before us would lead to such a disaster. Today, I am living a nightmare.

That year, TotalEnergies informed us that our land would be compulsorily acquired for the Tilenga oil drilling project. Our land was acquired for a well pad among other infrastructure. I had seen other families displaced by Total before, and they were not happy. I began to worry. We were so attached to our home, to our land.

If only I had known that five years later, my husband, my children, and I would be surrounded by armed security forces—including the Uganda Police and others—I might have been even more worried.

If I had also known that my house, which my husband and I built with sweat and love, would be bulldozed to the ground, with my livestock, saucepans and other domestic items being lost in the chaos, I would have wept for my children and I. Indeed, when Total approached us in 2018, I did not know that my life would become as desolate as it is today.

My husband and Total disagreed on our relocation.

Total wanted to move us to a temporary shelter before the new house they promised was completed

in February 2022. But fearing that our family, as farmers, would struggle to adapt to cramped rental units, my husband insisted they complete our house before relocating us.

Total refused to do so. Instead, they constructed chain-link fences around our property, and we lost our animals—our only source of livelihood. In December 2023, the Ugandan government sued us, seeking a court order to demolish our home and evict us. The court issued the order just four days after the case was filed!

With the support of non-governmental organisations like AFIEGO, we appealed the ruling, but the government ignored the legal processes. On May 13, 2024, our house was demolished, overseen by officials from government, Uganda Armed Forces and Total staff.

My 13-year-old son told me, "Existing in this world is the worst thing!" It was as though he wished he had never been born. Those words broke my heart.

I lost my children's clothes, UGX 400,000 (approximately USD 97.6), and livestock. I also lost kitchen items, furniture, and dry grass that I had been gathering to build a new house.

I want my old life back. I demand compensation from the Ugandan government for the damage they have caused me.

To Total, I say: Your treatment of Ugandans has shown us that we are not valued in our own country.











JOHN MARY LUBEGA, 78, KYOTERA DISTRICT

ohn Lubega Nsamba tells this story on behalf of his father, Mr. John Mary Lubega. Mr Lubega is one of 80 individuals in Southern Uganda impacted by the East African Crude Oil Pipeline (EACOP) project and sued by the Ugandan government in August 2024.

Mr Lubega and others rejected EACOP's compensation offer, arguing it was insufficient. In the lawsuit against them, the government requested permission from the court to deposit the compensation into the court's custody. They also asked the court to order Mr. Lubega and other families to cover the legal costs. The court granted the government's request in October 2024, save for the order for the affected families' to meet government's court costs. Here is Mr. Lubega's story:

My father, who is 78 years old, is in pain. A lot of pain. He began experiencing pelvic pain and other symptoms in the early 2000s. He received treatment, but the pain only worsened. After undergoing various tests, a biopsy in July 2022 confirmed that my father had cancer.

Today, he is bedridden, and the cancer is slowly taking its toll on him. Every first week of the month, he travels to Mulago Hospital in Kampala for chemotherapy. The treatment weakens him, and there are side effects. But perhaps the physical pain pales in comparison to the mental anguish that has engulfed him ever since he learnt that the government of Uganda intended to take his land away.

His misery began in 2019 when representatives from NewPlan, a subcontractor working for TotalEnergies, informed him that his land would be taken for the EACOP project. TotalEnergies acquired land for the pipeline on behalf of the Ugandan government. After intense discussions, my father's land was surveyed. But what shocked him was the order to stop growing perennial food and cash crops on the land. He was only allowed to grow crops that would mature in three months. He was informed by NewPlan that the urgency of the project demanded that he vacate the land immediately.

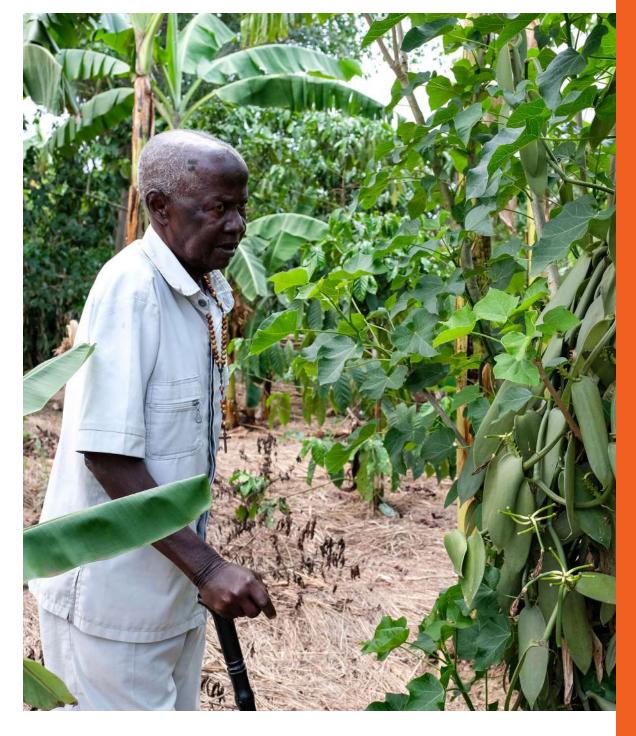
However, two years passed, and there was no sign of any pipeline construction in our village. There was no indication that such a large-scale project was about to begin.

What we did see was that the once-flourishing gardens full of fruit and food crops had turned into bushland because my father and others had abandoned their farms. Life became difficult. Food security was no longer guaranteed.

In 2021, my father decided to resume cultivating his land. But again, NewPlan arrived, demanding he stop using the land immediately. They convinced my father that he would be compensated handsomely, that this money would change his life. They offered UGX 13 million (about USD 3,555) per acre for the 2.137 acres they needed for the pipeline.

This offer did not account for the land's crops, including beans, maize, cassava, yams, banana plantations, fruit trees like mangoes, avocadoes, and jackfruit, palm trees, vanilla, coffee, and medicinal herbs, all of which were cash crops.

My father rejected the offer. NewPlan revised it to UGX 20 million (about USD 5,469) per acre, but this was still only for the land itself. My father felt this amount was too low, especially given its strategic location. It sits along



the main highway from Masaka to the Mutukula border, a key area for East African Community (EAC) trade. The land is also adjacent to the Lukoma airstrip, which holds potential for future development. The Sango Bay sugar estate and a palm oil plantation project are nearby.

Given these factors, my father argued that UGX 15 million (about USD 4,102) per 50x100 plot, based on prevailing market rates, would be a fair price. The land amounted to 19 plots in total and he insisted that he should be compensated per plot.

In August 2023, due to his worsening condition, my father reluctantly accepted UGX 17 million (about USD 4,649) in compensation for the crops on the land. This sum, though insufficient, was intended to help pay for his growing medical bills. To force his compliance, the government has sued my father for rejecting the initial compensation, accusing him of hindering a national development project. Weak and sick, my father had to travel with me to the High Court in Masaka in September 2024 for the case hearing. We were a pitiful sight, but we were told we had no choice but to be there.

My father inherited 27 acres from his own father. This inheritance is a longstanding tradition in our culture, and it would be a great injustice if the developers of the EACOP project denied my father the opportunity to pass down this legacy. But with the court's ruling against my father and others in October 2024, it seems that he may fail to leave an inheritance for his children.

This should not happen! TotalEnergies must respect our land and our rights. If they cannot offer fair compensation, they should leave our land alone.









IMMACULATE NAJJEMBA, 58, AND BABIRYE NALUTAAYA, 51, LWENGO DISTRICT

y name is Immaculate Najjemba, and my sister's name is Babirye Virigo Nalutaaya. Together, we are fighting the EACOP project, which has turned our lives upside wn.

We were born and raised in Nansiti village in Lwengo district, Southern Uganda. I am one of eight children, and our parents worked hard to ensure we were always well-fed, maintaining a large plantation that provided for our family.

The land around us was fertile, perfect for growing food and supporting our livelihood. But over the years, things began to change. As the population grew, the demand for land increased. The once-thriving vegetation thinned, and the weather grew hotter, altering the environment.

In 2018, while cultivating my land, I was approached by officials from NewPlan, a subcontractor working for the EACOP project. They informed me that a portion of my land would be acquired for the pipeline, and I would receive compensation for it.

My heart sank. This land had been my lifeline, inherited from my father, Mr. Kivumbi. What would happen to my family without it?

Though I don't know the exact size of the land they targeted, I know one thing for sure—the compensation offered was nowhere near enough. The crops that were being taken—coffee, bananas, avocados, pawpaw—were not only our food source but also provided us with a steady income. Losing this livelihood without fair reparation was, and still is, unacceptable

Babirye and I were accused of receiving compensation for the crops under false pretences. I received UGX 36 million (approximately USD 9,844), and Babirye received UGX 26 million (approximately USD 7,110) for the crops only. We have yet to receive any compensation for the land itself.

The compensation for the crops was grossly inadequate. For the loss of perennial crops that guaranteed us food and income every season, I should have received UGX 60 million (about USD 16,407) and Babirye UGX 80 million (about USD 21,877). This would have accounted for our loss of income.

Our compensation divided our family. The conflict grew so intense that in November 2022, my sister and I were arrested from our gardens and detained at Masaka Central Police Station and later remanded to Masaka Prison. We spent two months there, enduring the pain of false accusations and the agony of having our family torn apart. To this day, we still have not found peace.

In August 2024, the Ugandan government sued us. We were served court documents accusing us of obstructing a government development project. A valuer from EACOP, along with three others, handed us the court papers right at home. We were terrified, fearing another arrest.

We were told to appear in court on September 11, 2024, without fail. When we went to court, the judge only spoke to our lawyers, and since neither Babirye nor I speak English, we were left in the dark about what was happening. We still don't know whether we are supposed to keep reporting to the court or not.

What I do know is that we deserve justice. The government, EACOP, and the public need to listen to us. Why shouldn't we be compensated fairly for the land and crops taken from us?

They say the oil will transform Uganda. But, for my family, it has only brought misery.













ROGERS BYARUHANGA, 26, BULIISA

y name is Rogers Byaruhanga. I grew up in Wanseko village in Buliisa district. As a child, I loved playing football with my friends, and I dreamed of a future full of opportunities. But today, I can no longer play the sport I once loved due to the devastating impact that Uganda's oil sector has had on my health and livelihood.

I spent much of my childhood in boarding school and pursued vocational training, acquiring certificates in plumbing and scaffolding at schools in Western Uganda. These qualifications helped me secure a job with Civtec Africa Ltd in 2022, a construction and engineering firm contracted by TotalEnergies to handle building works under the Tilenga oil project. As a policy, Civtec's workers were housed in a camp in Buliisa district.

On January 28, 2024, I woke up like any other Sunday, said my prayers, and briefly socialised with my colleagues. The weather was calm, the birds were chirping, and the day seemed like any other. It reminded me of the Buliisa I grew up in—the one with lush trees, fresh air, and a strong sense of community.

But that day would change everything. My team and I worked on scaffolding, a routine task we performed regularly. But the platform my colleague was standing on became unstable and collapsed, striking me on the back, and I lost consciousness.

Thankfully, I was wearing a safety harness which prevented me from falling, but I was severely injured. I was rushed to Dalwish Private Hospital in Buliisa, where I regained consciousness six hours later. After that, I was referred to City Medicals, a larger facility in

Buliisa before being transferred to Havana Orthopedics Hospital in Hoima. I spent five weeks there, receiving care for my injuries.

During my recovery, I couldn't help but think about the three young children I take care of: How would they manage without me? How would I continue to provide for them and ensure they could continue their education? I'm grateful that Civtec Africa covered my medical treatment costs, but after that, they abandoned me. They terminated my contract while I was still recovering, leaving me without income and support.

When I was discharged, the doctors recommended that I return for a follow-up review after a month. However, when I tried to reach out to Civtec's Safety and HR managers to ask for help with transportation and support for the follow-up, they ignored me. As a result, I couldn't attend the review, and my health has been deteriorating. I've had no choice but to seek treatment from herbalists, as I can no longer afford proper medical care.

My life has been turned upside down. I can no longer support my family financially. My social life has drastically changed—I used to play football with friends, but now, due to the injury, that's no longer possible.

I demand that Civtec Africa compensate me for the damage this accident has caused to my life and livelihood. The company owes me more than just medical treatment; it owes me a chance to rebuild my life







DICKSON TUWESIGYE, 61, BULIISA DISTRICT

he death of my daughter, Bridget Katuride, should never have happened. But it did, and it has left me hollow. At times, I feel so empty that I wish I could join her in death.

But then I think of my family—18 people, including my seven children, seven grandchildren, and my wife. I remind myself that I must live. I must survive because they depend on me.

When times are hard, I remember an old saying: "When water pours on the ground, you cannot collect it again." I try to dust off my sorrow and keep moving forward.

Bridget's death has shaken me deeply. We named her Katuride, meaning "protector," because we believed she would one day protect us. Instead, it was Bridget who needed protection that fateful day.

On March 23, 2024, I had a painful toothache and returned home to rest. Bridget, ever the caring daughter, made sure I was comfortable before I went to bed.

Normally, I would stay up at night to guard our crops from elephants. They have been increasingly invading our gardens, which are vital for our food security and income, since TotalEnergies expanded its oil operations in Murchison Falls National Park. But that night, instead of waking me up, Bridget took charge and went outside with a few neighbours. They succeeded in driving the elephants away, but one charged from behind and struck Bridget. Despite the efforts of the others to scare it off, it was too late—the elephant had already trampled my daughter.

The neighbours rushed to our home, shouting, and my

heart sank. I ran to the garden and found Bridget, barely breathing. In disbelief, I called for a motorcycle taxi to take us to Bugana Clinic in Buliisa district. The clinic referred us to Kigoya Health Centre III, as they couldn't handle her injuries. At Kigoya, the staff struggled to find a vein to administer a drip, and Bridget passed away before they could help her. I was devastated—broken, helpless, and lost.

Bridget was born in 2002. She was our fifth child and a loving, social, and caring girl with a big heart. After her death, I had to come out of retirement to care for my children, my late brother's children, and my grandchildren. Bridget's daughter, now over two years old, will grow up without her mother.

I need justice. The elephants took my daughter's life and destroyed our crops, leaving us to live on scraps. To make matters worse, Bridget's funeral cost me UGX 4.5 million (about USD 1,983), but the Uganda Wildlife Authority (UWA) compensated me only UGX 2.5 million (around USD 610). I had to borrow money, and I am still trying to repay the debt.

In May 2024, Prime Minister Robinah Nabbanja ordered that my case be addressed, but so far, I have received no further assistance. I plead with the government, TotalEnergies, and all stakeholders to act immediately before another life is lost. A fence around Murchison Falls National Park would be a critical first step in protecting us.

Additionally, reducing activities that disturb the elephants in the park is essential to prevent further tragedies like the one that took my daughter.











CORINE NYAMUTORO, 38, BULIISA DISTRICT

y name is Corine Nyamutoro, and I was born on October 9, 1986, exactly 24 years after Uganda gained independence from the British. I often think of myself as a child of history, and I hope to achieve great things. However, the oil activities in Uganda stand in the way of my dreams.

I grew up in Kasinyi village in Buliisa district. Our village was peaceful and beautiful, with families nurturing trees and grasslands that supported agriculture. The community was tightly-knit, and we looked out for each other. Buliisa was a place of peace, and there were no land conflicts back then, unlike today.

My childhood was full of freedom. I played with my friends and often went with my parents to work on our family farm. My parents emphasised the importance of education, and I studied through to the Ordinary Level, later obtaining a Certificate in Nursing.

In January 2005, I married, but in 2021, my husband fell ill with a mental disorder after a trip to the Democratic Republic of Congo. He went back to Congo for treatment and has not returned home since. As a single mother, I struggled to provide for my children.

Around this time, TotalEnergies visited our garden and informed my father that they were going to acquire part of our family land for the Tilenga feeder pipeline.

At first, I was hopeful. I thought the compensation would allow me to start a business and secure our family's future. Two acres of our land where I had been growing crops were taken. But when the cut-off date came in 2021, I was preoccupied with looking for my husband, and by that time, my land was barren—no crops, no compensation. My family did receive compensation for the land, but as a land user, I was excluded.

Once I accepted that my husband might never return, I focused on the remaining parts of our land, where we continued to grow crops. But when construction of the feeder pipeline began in August 2024, things worsened. The construction activities have disrupted the drainage system in our area, causing frequent flooding whenever it rains. I've never experienced such flooding in my entire 38 years in Buliisa. Three acres of my land—where I had planted watermelons, bananas, sweet potatoes, pumpkins, and maize—are now submerged in water. My livelihood has been destroyed.

I am the sole breadwinner, and I refuse to be remembered as a historical woman who failed to feed her children because of oil-induced floods. I urge the Ugandan government to ask TotalEnergies to address the flooding issue before it leads to further suffering.

We also need proper compensation for our losses.

My family and I cannot continue to live this way.













GLADIS AKUMU, 30, BULIISA DISTRICT

need psychological help!

The memories of what happened to me keep flooding back, and I can't seem to escape them. I'm haunted by images and sounds that make me afraid to be alone and unable to sleep at night. When I see police cars, my body tenses with fear.

I wasn't always like this. But on August 10, 2023, something terrible happened to me. It started as an ordinary day. I woke up, cleaned my house, worked in my garden, and cared for my four children—my oldest is 12, and the youngest is two and a half years old.

But in my village of Kirama in Buliisa district, something was wrong. TotalEnergies had set up an oil rig in our community. Before this, my village was peaceful and beautiful, just like the village of Ombera, where I was born and raised in Northern Uganda. But TotalEnergies' arrival shattered that peace. The noise from the oil rig and its bright lights disturbed the villagers, especially the elderly. They complained about sleep deprivation and rising blood pressure. The dust from the construction work and the increased traffic made our community sick, especially the children. They caught colds, flu, and asthma.

The complaints continued, but nothing was done. In protest, some community members started a fire outside the oil rig's fence. The police intervened and arrested many of us. I was among those

detained, but my experience was the worst. While the other community members were released, I was held at Buliisa Central Police Station for three weeks. My case was then transferred to Masindi High Court and the judge decided to send me to Masindi Prison on charges of attempted arson.

I didn't start any fire, nor did I even go near the fence. Yet, as men fled the village, poor women like me—many of us with babies—were arrested and taken to prison. I was detained for more than two months, from August 10, 2023, to October 12, 2023, with my sick baby by my side.

When my family managed to pay my bail, I was released, but the damage had been done. My baby's health suffered because I couldn't breastfeed properly in prison, and my children faced hardship at home. They stopped going to school, and there were times when they went hungry because their father had fled, fearing arrest.

Now, I live in constant fear. I feel like a failure as a mother, unable to protect my children from the trauma we endured. I call on the public, especially NGOs, to help me. I need psychological rehabilitation.

And I seek justice. I was wrongfully detained and lost property in the process. I need to be compensated for the suffering my family and I endured.







COSMAS YIGA, 75, KYOTERA DISTRICT

y name is Cosmas Yoga, a proud member of the Ngabi (Bushbuck) clan. I have spent most of my life in Kyotera, but today, like many others in my community, I am caught in a battle over land being compulsorily acquired for the East African Crude Oil Pipeline (EACOP).

I am a resilient man, shaped by many years of experience, including significant personal loss. When I married Leticia Namatovu in 1981, I believed it would be a lifetime of happiness, but she left me and I was left to raise our five children alone. Despite the hardships, I made the decision to stay single, believing my children needed the lesson of sacrifice.

Now, that same resilience is being tested by the EACOP project, which threatens the land that has supported my family for generations. In 2019, I was approached by agents from a company called NewPlan, who informed me that my land would be taken for the oil pipeline.

On this land, I had a thriving mango farm, with at least 56 mango trees—valuable crops that had been tended to for years. Initially, I had no intention of opposing government projects, believing they were for the greater good. But when the compensation offer came through—just UGX 2.8 million (roughly \$700)—I was outraged.

This amount did not reflect the true value of my trees and crops. I calculated that the real worth of my mango trees was closer to UGX 1.4 billion (\$380,000), based on international valuation standards for perennial crops set by the World Bank. The process involves assessing the life span of the trees, deducting the years of maturity, and

considering the harvest per tree per year. For mangoes, one can harvest twice a year, and the trees have a productive lifespan of around 50 years, depending on environmental factors. When you multiply the income generated by these trees across their lifespan, it becomes clear that the government's offer was woefully inadequate.

Sadly, the oil companies and the Ugandan government are not backing down. They are determined to proceed with their project, dismissing our objections and the value of our land.

In moments like these, I often reflect on simpler times. My childhood was peaceful, full of warmth and community. And I am grateful for my education, which includes an accountancy qualification and certification from the Association of Certified Chartered Accountants (ACCA).

These qualifications have given me the knowledge and tools to challenge the government and oil companies. Unlike many others in the region, I can read and understand my rights, so I rejected TotalEnergies's poor compensation offer.

Unfortunately, when I refused the compensation, the government took me to court. But I remain steadfast. I am not asking for charity; I am simply asking for what is rightfully mine.

I urge the public to stand with those of us affected by the EACOP project. We need justice, and we need our rights to be respected—especially the vulnerable members of our communities.







HOPE ALINAITWE, 50, HOIMA DISTRICT

y name is Hope Alinaitwe, and I come from Western Uganda. I was raised in Kijumba, a village that was once a paradise, and it is where I still live.

Kijumba village was peaceful. The land was rich in biodiversity and abundant with indigenous fruit trees such as mangoes and jackfruits. We had animals like monkeys, wild pigs, and other wildlife. The soil was fertile and ideal for agriculture, and the climate was favourable with predictable seasons.

Growing up in such an environment was a gift. My father taught me how to graze goats, and I would spend hours with him, learning the rhythms of rural life. We relied on nature for everything—food, water, and even soap! We would use leaves from the *Musisa* [Albizia coriaria or *Mugavu* in Luganda] tree to make soap, a practice passed down from our elders.

I went to school for a while and later met and married. I had ten children and I am now a grandmother to six beautiful grandchildren.

But as I reflect on my life and my children's future, my heart is heavy. About three-quarters of our land has been taken for the East African Crude Oil Pipeline (EACOP). The land that was once the source of our livelihood—land with cassava, avocado plants, 16 matooke trees, a mature mango tree, and four beehives—has been seized. My family and I are now displaced, struggling to survive without the resources that once sustained us.

Kijumba village lies near the Wambabya Central Forest Reserve, which is home to chimpanzees and other wildlife. For years, we have been encouraged to conserve this forest while earning livelihoods through tree planting and beekeeping. Now, we are concerned that the EACOP will pass near Wambabya and Bugoma Central Forest Reserve, potentially harming the environment and wildlife, especially the chimpanzees. The forest has already been disturbed, and the chimpanzees have been growing more aggressive, attacking children. I fear this will only worsen if the pipeline is built.

I am also troubled by the inadequate compensation we have received for the land and crops lost to the EACOP. I was given only UGX 2.8 million (approximately USD 763) for my land, trees, and property. This sum is grossly insufficient, considering the loss of my fruit trees and the income they would have generated over the years. I had hoped for UGX 50 million (about USD 13,632), which would more fairly reflect the value of my crops and future earnings.

After being displaced, I have struggled with food insecurity. Since the cut-off date was imposed, I was not allowed to tend to my crops, including my mangoes and avocado plants, which dried up and died. I also face difficulties paying school fees for my children. I am worried that during construction, the EACOP will dump the soil in our compounds, as we have seen with other oil projects, which has caused damage to land and homes in the past.

I urge the company behind EACOP to reassess the compensation for my land and crops, considering what was left out in the initial valuation. I also request that the company find an appropriate location for soil disposal during construction to prevent further harm to our community.

Most importantly, we must protect our environment, as we rely on it for survival.









CHARLES BASALIZA, 54, BULIISA

ocal content! Those words are liberally thrown around by government officials and oil company workers during meetings with communities, and Ugandan investors.

"Grow crops to supply the oil sector," they urge.
"Expand your hotel, and you'll make big profits," they say with enthusiasm.

They highlight the robust laws enacted by Uganda's parliament to ensure that Ugandans benefit from the oil and gas sector. They emphasise that 17 goods and services have been ring-fenced by these laws, meaning only Ugandans can supply them to the oil industry. This is the promise they sold to us. How excited we were! They filled us with hope and dreams of prosperity.

But now, I find myself paying the price for what I can only call "local content gone wrong".

My name is Charles Basaliza Mulenga and I grew up in Kirama village in Buliisa district. My childhood was one of relative comfort and our village was peaceful, with an abundance of food and livestock farming. We enjoyed fresh milk daily, and with no vehicular traffic, the air was always crisp and clean.

In 2010 to 2017, I built a hotel called Tamarine Resort in Buliisa. The idea of owning a hotel had always been a dream of mine, especially since my location near Murchison Falls National Park made it a prime area for tourism.

More than just a business, I saw the hotel as a source

of income for my family and a legacy to pass down to my eleven children. I also hoped it would create employment opportunities for locals, which would benefit the wider community.

However, my hotel has not been as much of a blessing as I'd hoped, particularly after I decided to expand it in 2018 following promises from Tullow Oil and TotalEnergies. Representatives from both companies assured me that many of their workers would need accommodation once oil activities in the area ramped up. They even brought some workers to stay at my hotel, which made me believe their promises were

I borrowed UGX 100 million (approximately USD 24,415) from PostBank and UGX 20 million (approximately USD 4,883) from Centenary Bank in 2022. I added 16 new rooms, a kitchen, a dining hall, and a bathroom. But the workers who had been staying at my hotel left much sooner than I expected, and my revenue took a hit. Then, TotalEnergies decided to house their workers in camps, rather than local hotels. The income I had counted on to repay the loans was no longer there. The banks eventually advertised my hotel for sale, and I was forced to sell off personal property just to pay part of the loan. I still have a portion of the loan left to pay, and my hotel remains at risk of being seized.

I now see how misleading the promises of "local content" can be. Local content may sound good in theory but, in practice, it has not materialised in a way that benefits local investors like me. The oil companies

simply do not prioritise local businesses. I urge other local investors to be cautious and not to rely solely on the oil and gas sector for their businesses.

To help hotel owners like me who are struggling, I appeal to the public—tourists, civil society, and other sectors—to support local businesses. I also call on the government to use local accommodation services and other businesses to help keep them afloat.

I also ask the government to assess the situation of local investors who expanded their businesses based on promises from the oil companies. We have acted in good faith, taking loans in the hopes of benefiting from the oil sector, but have instead been left with mounting debts. The government should step in.







