

February 2023; Issue 2

UGANDA'S 2023/2024 BUDGET: GOV'T, PRIORITISE A JUST TRANSITION TO RENEWABLE ENERGY



A woman with a bundle of firewood. Uganda's budget should support women and other citizens to access clean energy

In this newsletter:

- Powering darkness? An analysis of Uganda's 2023/2024 budget
- Pictorial of our activities
- Lobbying
- In the media
- Upcoming events

Dear reader, welcome to our February 2023 newsletter.

On February 17, 2023, Africa Institute for Energy Governance (AFIEGO) in partnership with our Inclusive Green Economy Network- East Africa (IGEN-EA) partners held a radio talkshow in the Bunyoro sub-region. We discussed the 2023/2024 national budget allocations to the green economic sectors.

The discussions centred on allocations made to the renewable energy, natural resources, agriculture and tourism sectors as contained in the 2023/2024 National Budget Framework Paper. We particularly sought community views on what the priorities of the 2023/2024 national budget ought to be.

During the interactive radio talkshow, one caller observed that while agriculture is the backbone of the country, low budget allocations to the sector are made.

Another noted that while the agricultural sector is supporting other sectors such as manufacturing, prices for agricultural products are low compared to the processed products. He gave an example of maize and maize flour and said that the disparities in prices demotivate farmers.

Yet another listener pointed out that tourist attractions such as Bugoma forest are being destroyed, which is a loss for the country.

Another caller noted that climate

change had affected agricultural productivity.

The above community views are important and we are sharing them in this newsletter for policymakers' attention and action.

In this newsletter, we also discuss another important matter: that of whether the 2023/2024 national budget that was passed by parliament this month is responsive to the clean energy needs of Ugandans. Currently, Ugandans are faced with crises such as high electricity costs, expensive clean energy cooking options, scarcity of cooking energy, and others.

In our **Word from the CEO and Partners**, we analyse whether the allocations that were proposed for the electricity and renewable energy votes will address the above challenges.

We also look at whether the budget, with its allocations to the renewable energy vis-à-vis the oil and gas sector, will promote a just energy transition or regression. We make recommendations to address the gaps in the budget.

In this newsletter, we also bring you our **pictorial** section. In the section, we share the activities that we and our partners implemented this month. For instance, we held meetings with Bugoma forest host communities to strengthen their participation in the Bugoma forest restoration activities.

We also participated in a meeting with Ugandan government officials and members of the European Union

(EU) delegation to Uganda to discuss signing of a forest partnership for the promotion of forest conservation.

In addition, we held two meetings with oil-affected communities that sued the Ugandan government to defend their right to prompt, fair and adequate compensation. We discussed strategies for fasttracking hearing of the people's cases.

Furthermore, we supported the oil refinery-affected people to travel to the Hoima High Court for hearing of their court case. The case wasn't heard however because the judge was unavailable.

In addition, we held two meetings with communities whose land is being acquired for the Tilenga and East African Crude Oil Pipeline (EACOP) projects to empower them to defend their rights.

We also supported EACOP-affected communities to participate in media interviews and meetings with other stakeholders to mobilise public pressure for the restoration of the people's land, livelihood and other rights. We share this and much more in our pictorial.

In our **lobbying** section, we bring you some of the lobbying and advocacy

products that we disseminated this month. For instance, with our partners, we shared a civil society organisations' (CSO) communique following the launch of the drilling rig for the Kingfisher oil project.

Furthermore, we shared a letter to the chairperson of Uganda's Ramsar committee calling on him to prevent the degradation of Ramsar wetlands in Uganda due to oil activities.

We also supported the oil refinery-affected people to issue press statements before and after their court case hearing.

In addition, we supported the Tilenga-affected community to write to the Deputy Chief Justice to request for fasttracking of their court case.

Finally, in **in the media** section, we bring you the newspaper articles written by our staff and partners that were published in the leading newspapers in February.

We hope you will enjoy the newsletter.

Editorial team:

Diana Nabiruma

Patrick Edema

Balach Bakundane

POWERING DARKNESS? AN ANALYSIS OF UGANDA'S 2023/2024 BUDGET

An energy crisis is brewing in the Bunyoro sub-region. Sadly, the crisis was partly birthed by Uganda's aspirations to produce another form of energy: oil and gas.

To produce the country's fossil fuels, the Ugandan government together with its joint venture partners including TotalEnergies and China National Offshore Oil Corporation (CNOOC) are setting up infrastructure such as an international airport, roads, central processing facilities, well pads and others.

The above has necessitated the clearance of shrubs and trees that women and girls traditionally relied on to get cooking energy in the form of firewood. Firewood has become scarce so much so that women neighbouring the Hoima International Airport, which is under construction, report that they have to walk for as many as 6km to get the aforementioned cooking energy.

This is a huge burden.

Of course, firewood and charcoal are a bad form of energy as citizens' reliance on this biomass has led to massive forest degradation. Reliance on biomass also affects women's health.

Despite this, 94% of Uganda's population relies on biomass to meet their cooking energy needs. As earlier mentioned however, access has become difficult. Access to clean energy options such as electricity, clean energy-saving cookstoves and others is also limited.

Is the Ugandan government engaged

in sufficient efforts to improve citizens' access to clean energy?

ANALYSIS OF 2023/2024 BUDGET

In February 2023, Uganda's parliament approved the National Budget Framework (NBF) Paper with proposals of a Shs49.98 trillion budget for the Financial Year 2023/2024. Passing of the NBF Paper is in line with the requirement of the Public Finance Management Act that sets February 1st as the deadline for parliament to approve it.

However, are the budget proposals that were approved by parliament responsive to the clean energy needs of Ugandans? Do they also respond to global efforts to promote a just energy transition away from fossil fuels such as coal, oil and gas to clean energy?

AFIEGO and our partners analysed the 2023/2024 NBF Paper and we share our insights below.

(a) Sustainable energy development:

Over Shs. 1.2 trillion was proposed for the sustainable energy development (electricity) vote. Unfortunately, over 90% of these funds, or over Shs. 1.14 trillion, will go to funding electricity transmission and distribution initiatives.

Rural electrification and extension of power to industrial parks are some of the key planned activities under this vote. While the extension and distribution of power is important, there is little to show for the huge investments made in the grid to date. Available information shows that though nearly Shs. **10 trillion** has, since 2013, been borrowed and invested in expansion of the grid including to rural areas, only **27%** of

Ugandans have access to grid power. To continue making huge investments in extending the grid at the expense of cheaper and more accessible off-grid options for which the Ugandan population has shown immense interest is misguided.

It should be noted that despite low public investment in the off-grid sector, **38%** of Uganda's population has access to off-grid power. This demonstrates the appetite for off-grid options.

(b) Renewable energy allocations: The 2023/2024 NBF Paper notes that under the renewable energy vote, focus will be put on enhancing solar street lighting, enabling farmers' access to solar powered water pumps, awareness raising on energy-efficient cooking solutions and others.

While these are commendable initiatives, more needs to be done to support off-grid electrification for households, support access to finances for women and youth start-ups on clean energy cooking and others. Shs. 5.4 billion and Shs. 4.5 billion were allocated to the renewable energy and energy efficiency votes respectively. These funds are too little to support the above initiatives.

Rs: medium term budget allocations by sub-programme and vote

Table P3.1: Proposed Budget Allocations and Medium Term Projections by Sub-P

Billion Uganda Shillings	FY2022/23	2023/24
	Approved Budget	Proposed Budget
01 Generation	390.470	69.016
02 Transmission and Distribution	1,185.358	1,143.925
03 Renewable Energy Development	0.680	5.468
04 Energy Efficiency	0.600	4.513
Total for the Programme	1,577.108	1,222.922

Allocations under the Sustainable energy vote
Source: 2023/2024 NBF Paper

(c) Expansion of oil exploitation: At a time when countries have set energy transition goals including phasing down of fossil fuel-powered cars, increasing the share of renewable energy in their energy mix and others, Uganda is looking to expand her fossil fuel sector.

Accordingly, budget allocations were made to the petroleum vote. Over Shs. 539.2 billion was proposed for the vote. Among others, government will focus on fasttracking activities aimed at enabling construction of the East African Crude Oil Pipeline (EACOP) and an oil refinery. Government will also focus on completing land acquisition for the finished petroleum products pipeline right of way, concluding data acquisition for the Moroto-Kadam basin and commencing data acquisition for the Kyoga basin.

At a time when the International Energy Agency (IEA) has **warned** that the market share of oil will level off in the mid-2030s, the Ugandan government is making allocations for the oil sector! Yet votes such as renewable energy are under-funded. This is misguided.

(d) Low allocations to NEMA: The Ugandan government has vigorously defended its oil exploitation efforts, arguing that the efforts are being undertaken in a sustainable manner.

Entities such as Uganda's National Environment Management Authority (NEMA) are key to ensuring that the oil and gas exploitation activities are monitored for the protection of the environment. Oil extraction activities are set to take place in national parks and lakes; infrastructure for these activities is already being set up.

Oil roads, pipelines and others are also supposed to be or have been constructed through national parks, forests, rivers, wetlands and other ecosensitive areas. NEMA's monitoring role amidst these activities cannot be over-emphasized therefore.

However, an analysis of the 2023/2024 NBF Paper shows that no money for petroleum activities had been spent by NEMA by the end September 2022.

Could NEMA have used its meagre resources to monitor oil activities in 2022 yet the authority complains of under-funding? In addition, only Shs. 500 million has been allocated to NEMA under the 2023/2024 petroleum vote.

This money is insufficient and cannot enable NEMA to independently monitor oil activities to promote environmental conservation.

SUSTAINABLE PETROLEUM DEVELOPMENT

Table P3.2: Proposed Budget Allocations and Medium Term Projections by Vote

Billion Uganda Shillings	FY2022/23		2023/24
	Approved Budget	Spent by End Sep	Proposed Budget
006 Ministry of Foreign Affairs			0.695
008 Ministry of Finance, Planning and Economic Development	720.350	92.390	281.350
013 Ministry of Education and Sports			1.000
017 Ministry of Energy and Mineral Development	84.940	0.034	160.045
139 Petroleum Authority of Uganda (PAU)	63.720	6.136	94.415
150 National Environment Management Authority (NEMA)			0.500
154 Uganda National Bureau of Standards (UNBS)			0.900
506 Uganda High Commission in Tanzania, Dar es Salaam	0.305	0.076	0.305
Total for the Programme	869.316	98.636	539.210

Allocations under the petroleum vote Source: 2023/2024 NBF Paper

(e) Jobs: Renewable energy jobs are key to supporting Uganda to create employment for women, youth and other sections of the population. Further, world over, countries are making projections on the number of renewable energy jobs that could be created due to just energy transition efforts.

However, Uganda's 2023/2024 NBF Paper does not indicate the number of renewable energy jobs that the country intends to create in the coming financial year.

However, those for the oil sector including 5,000 indirect and 1,000 professional jobs for Ugandans are indicated. This is perhaps indicative of the Ugandan government's over-emphasis of the petroleum sector when the renewable one has potential to create more jobs.

CONCLUSION & RECOMMENDATIONS

It is imperative for the Ugandan government to make budget allocations that meet the clean energy needs of Ugandans. Accordingly, AFIEGO and our partners make the following recommendations:

(i) Place emphasis on increasing off-grid electrification by providing more resources for renewable energy.

(ii) Increase budget allocations for interventions aimed at increasing citizens' access to clean cooking options.

(iii) Stop the expansion of oil exploitation efforts to save Ugandans the risk of stranded assets amidst increasing debts incurred for the oil sector.

(iv) Set performance targets in relation to the number of renewable energy jobs that should be created in 2023/2024 and beyond.

(v) Finally, increase allocations to the natural resources, environment and climate change vote to make Ugandans resilient to the climate crisis.

By CEO and Partners

Pictorial of our activities

AFIEGO ENGAGES OIL REFINERY-AFFECTED COMMUNITIES ON THEIR COURT CASE



On February 10, 2023, AFIEGO organised a meeting with the oil refinery project-affected communities in Kyakaboga village, Hoima district (top photo).

During the meeting, the affected people and AFIEGO prepared for the people's case that was to be heard in February.

However, the hearing did not take place due to the absence of the judge.

A meeting in Hoima district was held on February 11, 2023 after the failed hearing (bottom photo). The meeting discussed strategies to fasttrack hearing of the people's case, which was filed in March 2014.

AFIEGO AND TILENGA OIL PROJECT-AFFECTED COMMUNITIES DISCUSS RIGHTS PROTECTION



On February 10, 2023, AFIEGO held a meeting with community observers in Buliisa district.

During the meeting, AFIEGO and the observers discussed ways in which the Tilenga oil project-affected communities' rights can be protected.

The meeting also agreed on the strategies that should be employed to compel the judiciary to fasttrack hearing of a court case that was filed by nine Tilenga-affected families in 2021.

The court case is aimed at protecting the people's land rights.

AFIEGO IN MEETING WITH GOVERNMENT AND EU TO DISCUSS FOREST PARTNERSHIP



On February 8, 2023, AFIEGO participated in a meeting between the EU and Uganda's Ministry of Water and Environment.

The meeting discussed a forest partnership between Uganda and the EU.

AFIEGO and our Save Bugoma Forest Campaign (SBFC) partners made input into the partnership's Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to promote forest conservation in Uganda.

AFIEGO AND COMMUNITIES IN RADIO TALKSHOW ON NEED TO RESTORE DEGRADED BUGOMA FOREST



On February 9, 2023, AFIEGO supported the SBFC local taskforce to participate in a radio talkshow to discuss NEMA's Bugoma forest restoration order to Hoima Sugar Ltd.

The talkshow was organised after a meeting was held with communities on the same subject.

During the meeting, communities laid strategies through which they could compel Hoima Sugar Ltd to act on NEMA's restoration order.

AFIEGO AND PARTNERS IN EXCHANGE LEARNING VISITS TO STRENGTHEN GENDER



In January 2023, AFIEGO and our Green Livelihoods Alliance (GLA) Uganda partners organised exchange learning visits to gather lessons on how we can strengthen gender in implementation of our programme.

AFIEGO supported our GLA partners to visit some forest and oil host communities that we work with.

In February 2023, AFIEGO and our partners issued a communique following the launch of the drilling rig for the Kingfisher oil project. In addition, with our partners, we wrote to the chairperson of Uganda's Ramsar Committee calling on him to protect Ramsar wetlands from oil activities.

We also worked with the oil refinery-affected people to issue press statements before and after their court case hearing.



January 24, 2023

CSO COMMUNIQUE ON LAUNCH OF DRILLING FOR THE KINGFISHER OIL PROJECT

1. INTRODUCTION

Today, Uganda's president, H.E. Yoweri Kaguta Museveni, is expected to officiate at a ceremony during which drilling for the Kingfisher oil project will be launched. Commercial oil production is expected to commence in Uganda in 2025. Today's occasion is the initial drilling for the project, and does not mark the beginning of oil production in Uganda.

The Kingfisher oil project is operated by China National Offshore Oil Corporation (CNOOC) (U) Ltd. The company's joint venture partners include TotalEnergies and the Ugandan government.

Prior to today's drilling ceremony which is expected to take place in Kikuube district in Uganda's ecosensitive and biodiverse Albertine Graben, the undersigned Ugandan, Congolese and African civil society organisations (CSOs) as well as their partners, discussed the planned launch.

During their discussions, the CSOs expressed dismay that the Ugandan government alongside CNOOC and TotalEnergies are ignoring citizen voices and climate science to push ahead with the perilous Kingfisher, Tilenga and East African Crude Oil Pipeline (EACOP) projects.

The CSOs noted that investment in the climate and biodiversity-wrecking Kingfisher, Tilenga and EACOP oil projects is a disservice to the Ugandan poor. This is so because researchers have warned that climate change could knock 18% off the global GDP and deepen inequalities, with poorer communities being the most affected.

1

AFRICA INSTITUTE FOR ENERGY GOVERNANCE

PO BOX 2000 Kampala, Uganda. Tel: +256 312 200000. Email: info@afiego.org. Website: www.afiego.org



February 15, 2023

To: The Chairperson,
Ramsar Wetlands Committee-Uganda,
Ministry of Water and Environment (MWE),
Kampala (U).



Dear Sir/Madam,

RE: REQUEST TO TAKE ACTION TO STOP DEGRADATION OF RAMSAR WETLANDS DUE TO OIL ACTIVITIES

Greetings from the undersigned Ugandan environmental and human rights civil society organisations (CSOs). We take this opportunity to thank you for your valiant efforts in promoting wetland conservation.

Because wetlands are important to Uganda, the country joined the rest of the world to mark World Wetlands Day on February 2, 2023. The day also marked the 52nd anniversary of signing of the Ramsar Convention, an "intergovernmental treaty that provides the framework for the conservation and wise use of wetlands and their resources."

Uganda marked the World Wetlands Day under the theme, "It's time for wetland restoration".

In a speech¹ made a day before World Wetlands Day, the state minister for environment, Hon. Beatrice Anywar, noted that Uganda's intact wetland coverage stands at 9.3%, up from 8.9% in 2015. The minister also observed that government had continued to put wetland conservation at the forefront.

We thank the Ugandan government and the Wetlands Department at the MWE, which you head, for prioritising wetland conservation.

However, we are concerned about the ongoing oil and gas exploitation activities and their impending impact on Ramsar wetlands in Uganda.

Through this letter therefore, we are requesting you to engage the Ugandan President, Minister of Energy and Mineral Development, Uganda National Oil Company, the Petroleum Authority of Uganda (PAU), TotalEnergies and China National Offshore Oil Corporation (CNOOC) to stop any oil activities that are affecting or could affect Ramsar wetlands in Uganda.

As you are well aware, Article 3 (1) of the 1971 Ramsar Convention to which Uganda is a signatory states that, "The Contracting Parties shall formulate and implement their planning so as to promote the conservation of the wetlands ..."

¹ Anywar, B. (2023). Statement made by the Minister of Water and Environment on the eve of World Wetlands Day. https://www.uganda.gov.ug/sites/default/files/media/2023/02/20230202_WWTD_Statement.pdf

AFRICA INSTITUTE FOR ENERGY GOVERNANCE

The Deputy Chief Justice,
Court of Appeal,
Kampala-Uganda



February 12, 2023

Dear Sir,

RE: LETTER REQUESTING FOR A MEETING TO PRESENT A PETITION AGAINST THE INJUSTICES IN APPLICATION NO 1910F 2021

The above subject refers to,

Greetings from the Africa Institute for Energy Governance (AFIEGO). AFIEGO is a Ugandan incorporated company limited by guarantee for non-profit whose main objective is to promote good energy governance in Uganda and the Great Lakes Region at large. Among other activities, we support local communities and vulnerable groups to enjoy access to their rights including access to information, public participation, and access to justice for redress among others.

This letter is written and presented to you on behalf of the nine (9) project-affected persons (PAPs) of the Tilenga oil project in Buliisa district. In 2017, the government of Uganda together with oil companies namely TotalEnergies commenced the process of land acquisition for the above oil project which affected local communities including the nine (9) PAPs and their families. This was due to the failure of the government and oil companies to pay fair, adequate and prompt compensation to the affected people.

In 2019, the government of Uganda through the Attorney General filed a case against the families who rejected the unfair compensation and refused to give their land. The case was filed at the High Court of Uganda in Masindi district and within six (6) minutes, the court ruled in favor of the government.

In 2021, the affected families/appellants were dissatisfied with the ruling, so they appealed to the court of appeal. Sadly, since 2021 when the application for an extension of time was filed until to date, the case has never been set for hearing and yet the affected families continue to suffer due to the actions of the government and oil companies.

1



February 10, 2023

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE Kampala, Uganda

OIL PROJECT-AFFECTED PERSONS PROTEST OVER DELAYED JUSTICE

Households whose land in Hoima district was acquired for the Kabaale Industrial Park, commonly known as the oil refinery project, today protested against the Ugandan judiciary's failure to dispense them with justice. The protest took place in Hoima district.

Those whose land was compulsorily acquired by TotalEnergies for the Tilenga Industrial Area in Buliisa district also held a protest against the judiciary. The protest took place in Buliisa district.

The households filed cases in Uganda's High Court and Court of Appeal in 2014 and 2021 respectively. The households sought court's intervention to protect their right to receiving prompt, fair and adequate compensation that is provided for under Article 26 of Uganda's 1995 Constitution.

Unfortunately, since filing of the court cases, the people have never received justice.

"Court was supposed to hear our case yesterday [February 9] but when we arrived at the Hoima High Court, we were informed that our case file is still at the Masindi High Court.

On November 10, 2022 however, the Masindi High Court told us not to go back to Masindi. They informed us that our case would be heard at the Hoima High Court," Mr. Innocent Tumwebaze, the chairperson of the Oil Refinery Residents Association (ORRA), says.

He adds, "To make matters worse, even if the file had been at Hoima High Court, no hearing would have taken place because the judge was absent."

Ms. Margaret Nankya, an oil refinery-affected person, says, "Why are the courts failing poor communities? Do they want to contribute to the oil curse? If poor women's land is taken and the women aren't paid fair and adequate compensation, then women are condemned to poverty. This is unacceptable and courts must stop such injustices. It however looks like they are not interested in protecting us."

Mr. John Tundulu, one of the Tilenga community observers, says, "Justice is not for the poor: this is the conclusion that the judiciary perhaps wants us to arrive at. When government sued

1

In the media

This month, AFIEGO staff, research associates and youth champions wrote newspaper articles that were published in the leading newspapers. The media also published articles from the media interviews we held this month. Some of the published articles are captured below.

Human encroachment on animal habitats risks more pandemics

EDITOR: On September 20, last year, Uganda declared an Ebola disease outbreak caused by the Sudan ebolavirus species, after the confirmation of a case in Mubende district in the central part of the country. Over 160 people were infected and 77 people died. That was Uganda's fifth outbreak with Sudan ebolavirus.

Uganda last reported an outbreak of Sudan ebolavirus in 2012. In 2019, the country experienced an outbreak of Zaire ebolavirus.

Ebola virus disease (EVD), one of the deadliest viral diseases, was discovered in 1976 when two consecutive outbreaks of fatal haemorrhagic fever occurred in different parts of Central Africa. The first outbreak occurred in the Democratic Republic of Congo (formerly Zaire) in a village near the Ebola River, which gave the virus its name. The second outbreak occurred in what is now South Sudan.

African fruit bats are likely involved in the spread of the Ebola virus and may even be the source animal (reservoir host). Encroachment into forested areas and direct interaction with wildlife (such

LETTER OF THE DAY

HAVE YOU GOT SOMETHING TO SAY?
email us at letters@newvision.co.ug

as bushmeat consumption) may have contributed to the spread of the virus.

However, animals can sometimes carry harmful germs that can spread to people and cause illness – these are known as zoonotic diseases.

Zoonotic diseases are caused by harmful germs such as viruses, bacteria, parasites and fungi. These germs can cause many different types of illnesses in people and animals, ranging from mild to serious and even death. Animals can sometimes appear healthy even when they are carrying germs that can make people sick, depending on the zoonotic disease, through coming into contact with the saliva, blood, urine, mucous, faeces or other body fluids of an infected animal.

As we continue to infringe on forest habitats and national parks, host communities stand

a high chance of suffering wildlife-human conflicts and pandemics that have greatly affected the health of massive populations and crippled the global economy.

Pandemics are severe, often fatal illnesses affecting humans and other primates. Humans are pushing further and further into new habitats, increasing human-wildlife contact. These interactions have serious consequences. When we interact more directly with wildlife, we also interact more closely with the diseases they carry.

Diseases that jump from animals to humans are increasing in frequency. In the early 2000s, SARS spread from bats and civet cats; a century ago, the Spanish influenza affected birds and other mammals before it transferred to humans; recently, COVID-19 spread from a wildlife market in China.

Human encroachment into animal habitats is increasing the risk of new infectious diseases such as COVID-19, Ebola and influenza. Primates, bats and rats accounted for the vast majority of zoonotic diseases – those which transfer from animals to humans and account for 70% of all human pathogens.

But it also found that hunting, the wildlife trade and the conversion of land for agriculture is increasing the interaction of humans with wild animals and, with it, the risk of disease transmission.

Destruction of natural habitats in particular, under disease spillover events, putting us at risk of emerging infectious diseases. The novel coronavirus that causes COVID-19 is believed to have originated in bats, which have been carriers for other coronaviruses, as well as Ebola and the Nipah virus. Let's rise up, be vigilant and prevent the spread of pandemics through conservation of animal habitats and sustainably manage wildlife to pave way for a brighter, stable economy.

Babra Kembabazi
babrakembabazi@gmail.com

Radio talkshow Greening Uganda's 2023/24 budget

Tune in to 89.9FM
Spice FM

On Friday 17th
From 7pm - 8pm, EAT



FY 2023/2024 BUDGET SHOULD CATER FOR SOLAR ENERGY

EDITOR: It should be noted that Uganda has been grappling with power blackouts for a long time, which normally leaves businesses stranded with high costs of operation, driving most of them out before their first birthday. This gravely affects the national tax base and dwarfs the economy. It's vividly clear that Uganda has to invest massively in solar energy to reduce on the economic shocks we are experiencing due to rampant power blackouts.

According to a World Bank report, 42.1% Ugandans had access to electricity as of 2020, which is still low, most probably due to dominance of hydro power, high tariffs and high levels of poverty, among others, hence calling for immense investment in alternative renewable energy like solar.

The energy ministry should consider lobbying for more funds to be allocated

YOUR MAIL

HAVE YOU GOT SOMETHING TO SAY?

email us at letters@newvision.co.ug
or SMS: Text Letters to 8339

to solar energy projects, since it's the most abundant, sustainable and affordable to complement hydro electric power.

The average solar radiation is 5.1kWh/m²/day; with the current solar data showing that solar energy is high throughout the year, with a variation (minimum month/maximum month) of only about 20% maximum.

Solar energy is a renewable resource and does not emit any greenhouse gases in the energy generation

process. As a result, it does not cause pollution, making it the most fit energy alternative.

Globally, in 2018, air pollution from fossil fuels cost \$2.9trillion in health and economic costs of about \$8b a day. Switching to clean sources of energy, such as wind and solar helps address not only climate change, but also air pollution and health.

Solar panels are easy to maintain, as they have no moving parts that wear out overtime. Just keep them clean and in good physical condition to keep them working properly.

Finally, the Government needs to gun up strategies of utilising our natural resources to be able to harvest sufficient power for our nation and solar energy. That is the real deal.

Kembabazi Babra
Babrakembabazi92@gmail.com

CANCEL LAND TITLES IN ALL WETLANDS

EDITOR: On February 2, countries all over the world celebrated "World Wetlands Day" to mark the date of the adoption of the Ramsar Convention on wetlands, and the theme was: It's time for wetland restoration.

In Uganda, the celebrations took place at Gweri sub-county in the eastern city of Soroti, and the leaders there pledged to protect the wetlands that have been put under threat by encroachers.

Wetland encroachment was previously under control because they play a big role for ecosystem services such as water purification, flood control and climate moderation to improve environmental quality, public health, and risk reduction. However, this is no longer

YOUR MAIL

HAVE YOU GOT SOMETHING TO SAY?
email us at letters@newvision.co.ug
or SMS: Text Letters to 8338

the case, and it has become a story of the past as swamp reclamation for agricultural and commercial activities has become the present story of the country.

Recently, the Government reaffirmed its position to crackdown on encroachers and cancel the 20,000 land titles issued to private developers in wetlands, of which 330 were cancelled in Mukono, Kampala, and Wakiso and 300 were still under cancellation process in Rukiga and Bukeke districts.

I am urging the Government to keep its promise of cancelling the pending 300 land titles in order to protect the wetlands, as a report by the Ministry of Water and Environment indicates that if no action is taken today, Uganda will be left with only 1.6% of its current wetlands cover by 2040.

This is because we continue to see new developers in our wetlands being safeguarded by security personnel, leaving us wondering, "Who really does this?" yet the Government says "land titles have been cancelled". The leaders that pledged to protect the wetlands during the Wetland Day celebrations should also stand by their words to ensure that the offenders are dealt with once and for all.

Last but not least, the Government should allocate

more money to the wetlands management department to cater for regular monitoring of the wetlands, since most of the leaders at the local level claim not to have sufficient funds to perform the work.

Conclusively, we, the non-governmental organisations, and the environment activists, should make it our duty to continue carrying out mass awareness protests in communities that have continued to use the wetlands for domestic and agricultural use, triggering endless floods, water pollution, weather and seasonal changes, and loss of vegetation cover in different regions of our country. Restore wetlands now to save life.

Hildah Nsimile
hildahnsimile@gmail.com

Engage oil-affected communities in green economic activities

EDITOR: Recently when President Yoweri Museveni was launching the Kingfisher field in Buhuka, Kyagwali sub-county, Kikuube district, he encouraged Ugandans, especially the oil-affected communities, to engage in the agriculture in order to tap in the oil and gas sector by providing enough food to it.

This was a good idea, but it will not help the oil-affected people if they are not supported financially, in terms of markets, extension services and on what should be prioritised on while practising agriculture.

The oil-affected communities need to be engaged in green economic activities such as agriculture, tourism, afforestation and renewable

LETTER OF THE DAY
HAVE YOU GOT SOMETHING TO SAY?
email us at letters@newvision.co.ug

energy. Under agriculture sector, the Government needs to engage the oil-affected communities in eco-friendly activities, such as tree and fruit growing, fish and poultry rearing, as well as bee keeping. These activities will create employment and provide enough food for families and the oil and gas sector.

The Government and oil companies also need to award

the contracts for supplying food to the oil companies on merit. It has been noted that most of the contracts which that have so far been given out were awarded to rich people and those with connections.

Through the livelihood programmes that the oil companies and government are providing to the oil-affected communities, they should provide high quality seeds,

markets and extension services that will enable them provide good quality food.

About 70% of the Ugandan population depends on the agriculture sector and Bunyoro region contributes much to this percentage because of the fertile soils and big pieces of land.

Therefore, I call on government and the oil companies to help the oil-affected communities to engage in green economic activities as they provide more jobs than the oil and gas sector and do not harm the environment.

Kato Paul
Research Associate
Kato.padyee@gmail.com

Upcoming events

March 2, 2023; Kampala: Media engagement on impacts of delayed justice for oil project-affected communities

March 7, 2023; Kampala: Engagement with parliament on the need to investigate challenges of Karuma hydropower dam

March 13-16, 2023; Bunyoro and Greater Masaka: Legal aid clinics for oil-affected communities

March 21-23, 2023; Greater Masaka and Bunyoro: Exchange learning visits between EACOP project-affected communities

March 28, 2023; Hoima: Support women beekeepers to engage Hoima district local government on tree planting

March 31, 2023; Kampala: Engage Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Uganda Human Rights Commission for action on recommendations that Uganda received during the 2022 Universal Periodic Review

About Africa Institute for Energy Governance (AFIEGO)

AFIEGO is a non-profit company limited by guarantee that was incorporated under Uganda's Companies Act. AFIEGO undertakes public policy research and advocacy to influence energy policies to benefit the poor and vulnerable. Based in Kampala-Uganda, the non-profit company was born out of the need to contribute to efforts to turn Africa's clean energy potential into reality and to ensure that the common man and woman benefits from this energy boom. Through lobbying, research and community education, AFIEGO works with communities and leaders to ensure that clean energy resources are utilised in a way that promotes equitable development, environmental conservation and respect for human rights.

Our Vision

A society that equitably uses clean energy resources for socio-economic development

Our Mission

To promote energy policies that benefit poor and vulnerable communities