



MEDIA RELEASE FROM AFIEGO AND COTFONE'S EACOP ENGAGEMENTS IN GREATER MASAKA & BUNYORO

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE MASAKA

This week, between April 5 and 8, 2021, Africa Institute for Energy Governance (AFIEGO) in partnership with Community Transformation Foundation Network (COTFONE) engaged with district leaders and communities whose land is being compulsorily acquired for the East African Crude Oil Pipeline (EACOP) project.

AFIEGO and COTFONE engaged with district leaders and communities in Lwengo, Kyotera, Rakai, Hoima and Kikkube districts. Other engagements in other EACOP-affected districts are planned.

Today, our two organisations would like to share with you our findings from the engagements we undertook and the recommendations made by stakeholders to address the challenges caused by the EACOP project.

Issue 1: District leaders demand for EACOP RAP report

The district leaders and project-affected persons (PAPs) that we met decried failure by the EACOP project developers to officially share the Resettlement Action Plan (RAP) for the EACOP project with them. The RAP is an important document that guides how compensation and physical relocation of the PAPs will be done. The RAP also lists the entitlements due to the PAPs among others.

The district leaders that our organisations engaged noted that failure to officially share the RAP with them means that they will not be able to effectively participate in the EACOP compensation and resettlement processes. This will cause challenges such as encroachment on protected areas, family breakdowns as well increased school drop-out rates, prostitution and HIV rates. With Greater Masaka having been ravaged by HIV in the 1980s and thereafter, the leaders want to avoid the social and environmental challenges of the EACOP.

Recommendation

They are therefore calling on the EACOP project developers to officially share the EACOP hardcopy RAP reports with them. These reports can be found online [here](#).

Issue 2: Compensation payment date should be shared by government

Following the EACOP project developers telling the PAPs that they can use their land to grow seasonal crops as well as maintain their houses and other structures, the PAPs are questioning whether they will receive compensation soon. In meetings in Lwengo and Kyotera, the PAPs noted that allowing them to use their land for the above purposes after having been stopped for nearly three years is an indicator that they are not about to be compensated.

This has increased the PAPs' angst against the project as they feel that they have already lost income due to having been stopped from using their land to set up new developments, grow perennial cash crops such as coffee and others.

Moreover, the PAPs say that while residual or orphan land is being assessed and valued, they don't know the value of their properties that were assessed before the cut-off-date of 2019. The majority of the PAPs who participated in our meetings also say that they don't know the compensation rates that were set by the district land boards and were used to value their property. This puts them at risk of being cheated during compensation processes.



A poster at the Kyotera district headquarters informing the EACOP PAPs to use their land. A woman who introduced herself as being from Total handed out these posters to EACOP PAPs in Kakuuto sub-county, Kyotera district at a meeting organised by AFIEGO and COTFONE on April 7, 2021.

Recommendation

The PAPs are tired of waiting and some have warned that they will no longer participate in any of the EACOP project developers' meetings. They want no more excuses. They are demanding for the date by which government will compensate them.

Issue 3: Lack of budgets for environmental monitoring

The Tilenga, Kingfisher, EACOP and oil roads projects are located in ecosensitive areas such as Murchison Falls National Park, Budongo forest, River Nile, River Kibale in Rakai and Kyotera, Lake Albert, wetlands and others. District natural resources officers are worried that this environmental footprint is too large and poses serious risks.

They therefore need funds and capacity strengthening to monitor the above oil projects' impacts. However, the district leaders decried the limited budgets they are provided with and

the lack of funds for oil and gas monitoring in particular. This means that they cannot undertake independent monitoring to assure Ugandans of the safety of their natural resources.

Recommendation

Government should not proceed with the above-mentioned oil projects without availing funds for oil and gas environmental monitoring. Doing so puts the environment and Ugandans' wellbeing in danger.

Issue 4: Intimidation should stop

The EACOP project developers such as Total have issued [statements](#) in which they noted that they do “not use or tolerate the use by others of aggression or physical or legal threats against people who are exercising their right to freedom of expression or their right to peaceful assembly”. However, to date, the EACOP PAPs complain of intimidation and being forced to sign assessment forms that they don't agree with.

Moreover, during AFIEGO and COTFONE's engagements this week, intimidation tactics were seen. Government agents who introduced themselves as being from the Ministry of Energy came to a community meeting that they were not invited to on April 8, 2021 in Lwanda sub-county, Rakai district.

The purported government agent who was wearing a Ministry of Energy jacket demanded to know why our organisations had organised community meetings without permission from government. No Ugandan law bars such meetings. In fact, laws such as the 1995 Uganda Constitution uphold freedom of assembly. Moreover, AFIEGO and COTFONE had engaged district and sub-county leaders.

Later, after an exchange with communities which are unhappy with government, the purported government agent informed our organisations that he wouldn't say much but we “would see after he made a report”. His tone as well as behaviour were not only threatening but unbecoming.

Recommendation

Intimidation of PAPs and CSOs will not buy the EACOP project developers the social license they need to operate. Where lack of social license exists as in Nigeria, communities destroy oil infrastructure. This must be guarded against through the EACOP project developers upholding community and all Ugandans' right to freedom of access to information, assembly and others.

Finally, communities and other stakeholders we engaged this week called for the following:

- They want to know what government and oil companies will do to stop the climate change dangers of the EACOP, Tilenga and Kingfisher oil projects on communities' livelihoods. The projects will produce over 34.3 million metric tonnes, over 48 million metric tonnes and over 26 million metric tonnes of carbon per year respectively.
- The communities also wanted to know how government will maintain the integrity of wetlands, forests and other biodiversity amidst the above and oil roads projects.

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ABOUT AFIEGO & COTFONE

AFIEGO is a registered public policy research and advocacy organisation one of whose main objectives is to promote environmental conservation and defend the rights of energy projects-affected communities. Since 2005, AFIEGO, has worked with leaders and communities across Uganda to defend communities' land, access to justice, access to information and other rights. AFIEGO has worked with tens of thousands of oil-affected and electricity projects-affected people across Uganda and across borders to defend their above-mentioned rights.

COTFONE is a registered indigenous community driven network of community actors (state and non-state) founded in 2006 and registered as a charitable organisation in Uganda advocating for the rights of marginalised and vulnerable people. Since 2019, COTFONE has been working with EACOP-affected communities in Greater Masaka to defend their human rights.