

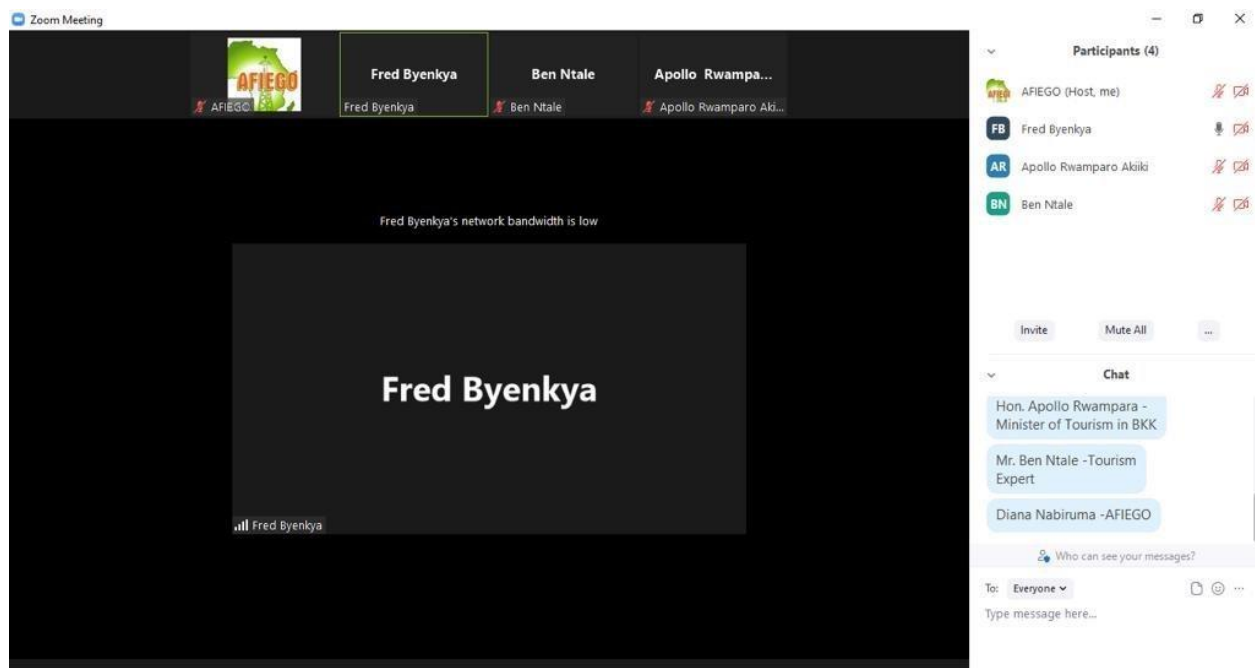


**INCLUSIVE GREEN ECONOMY NETWORK-EAST
AFRICA**

Kampala, Uganda • Website: www.igen-ea.org • Email: contact@igen-ea.org



A PROCEEDINGS REPORT FOR A RADIO TALKSHOW “THE ECONOMIC POTENTIAL OF BUGOMA FOREST VIS-À-VIS OIL RISKS”



**SEPTEMBER 17, 2021
89.9 SPICE FM, HOIMA DISTRICT
7:00 – 8:00PM**

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1.0. Introduction

On September 17, 2021, the Inclusive Green Economy Network-East Africa (IGEN-EA) under the coordination of Africa Institute for Energy Governance (AFIEGO) organised a radio talkshow at Spice Radio in Hoima district.

During the talk show, selected IGEN-EA members discussed “*The economic potential of Bugoma forest vis-à-vis oil risks*”.

The major objective of the radio talkshow was to discuss the economic potential of the tourism sector and challenges brought about by destruction of Bugoma forest as well as development of oil infrastructure in eco-sensitive areas such as forests and national parks.

At the time of the radio talkshow, there was limited stakeholder awareness of the tourism potential of Bugoma forest and oil exploitation dangers on green economic activities. The radio talkshow was therefore organised to raise stakeholder awareness and consequently support for conservation of Bugoma forest for the promotion of green economic activities.

Spice FM was selected to host the radio talkshow since the station reaches most of the oil and gas-affected districts in Bunyoro.

Below are the key issues discussed during the radio talkshow.

2.0. Key issues discussed

Moderator: Madam Diana, kindly tell us about the topic, purpose of the talkshow and about IGEN-EA.

AFIEGO’s Ms. Diana Nabiruma began by thanking all the listeners and Spice FM for having granted them the opportunity to reach out to the people. She then introduced other panelists including Mr. Ben Ntale, a tourism sector expert and Mr. Apollo Rwamparo, the Minister for Tourism in the Bunyoro Kitara Kingdom (BKK). She noted that the panelists would discuss how communities in Bunyoro could benefit from tourism and conservation of Bugoma forest.

Ms. Nabiruma then shared some information about IGEN-EA. She noted that the network brings together over 25 private sector and civil society actors whose main aim is to promote green economic activities such as tourism, clean energy, agriculture and fisheries as well as forestry for communities’ benefit.

Ms. Nabiruma observed that IGEN-EA was formed to catalyse inclusive green growth in Uganda as it was observed that industrialisation or economic activities such as sugarcane growing, oil and gas exploitation and others were being pursued by government as well as private companies at the expense of the environment. Yet Uganda can promote green economic activities such as tourism and create jobs as well as incomes for all without the environment being destroyed. IGEN-EA wants to promote green jobs and economic development, Ms. Nabiruma said.

Moderator: What is the tourism potential of Bugoma? What are the ongoing process for developing tourism in Bugoma and what kind of jobs can be created if tourism in Bugoma forest is allowed to flourish?

Mr. Ben Ntale began by thanking the moderator, AFIEGO and IGEN-EA for organising the radio talkshow. He noted that he was happy to speak to the people of Bunyoro to explain to them the importance of tourism and how it can help in money-making while nature is conserved.

He explained that Bugoma forest is located between two national parks - Murchison Falls and Kibaale. Given that, Mr. Ntale said, the forest can attract tourists as it can act as a stopover or resting point as tourists travel to Murchison Falls and Kibaale national parks.

Mr. Ntale noted that tourists would need accommodation, tour guides, food and handicrafts if tourism in Bugoma forest is allowed to flourish. Communities would provide these services.

He went ahead to say that Bugoma is of great importance since it has many tourist attraction features such as over 200 different bird species, over 500 chimpanzees and forest elephants. He also explained that the forest has different types of tree species which can be used for medicine and the forest creates space for the locals to practice apiary farming (bee keeping).

He noted that if the chimpanzees in Bugoma forest are habituated and get used to receiving tourists, locals would make money. The forest can also be used for nature-walks, he said. Community or cultural tourism could also be encouraged.

Mr. Ntale also emphasized the climate regulation, water provisioning and other roles played by Bugoma forest. He requested all concerned parties to join them in the struggle to save the forest. He added that Hoima and Bugoma are approximately 40kms apart. Tourists can sleep in Hoima and then move to Bugoma easily.

Moderator: Besides the advantages of tourism in Bugoma forest, we have heard of the destruction of the forest. What is the impact of destroying Bugoma forest on tourism?

Mr. Ntale stated the impacts as being:

- Death of animals; for example, an elephant was recently found dead. This will continue to happen if the destruction continues.
- Destruction of migration corridors for animals leading to inbreeding, resulting in a low lifespan.
- Increased human-wildlife conflicts.

Moderator: What role does tourism play in Bunyoro's development?

Mr. Apollo Rwamparo, the BKK Minister of Tourism, appreciated the moderator and the other panelists. He then discussed the role of tourism towards Bunyoro's development. He noted that as stated by Ms. Nabiruma, Bunyoro has many tourism features like forests, lakes, hot springs, theological sites, escarpments, and others which are being destroyed. He gave an example of Kibiro hot springs where government wanted to get geothermal energy but unfortunately, all efforts failed and the feature was destroyed. "Ahibale" was also destroyed to construct Kakumiro road.

He noted that BKK wants to preserve the culture of the people for future generations. However, people are not protecting but are instead destroying it as if the world ends with them.

Thereafter, Mr. Rwamparo explained about the destruction of Bugoma forest. He noted that the forest is being destroyed by refugees (not less than 15,000 people) and Hoima Sugar Limited (HSL). He said government has an inclusive policy which gives refugees freedom to interact and work in the community. He noted that the biggest part of Bugoma forest is being destroyed by the refugees.

He called upon politicians, local government, BKK, NGOs and other stakeholders to take action to conserve the forest for future generations. He also called for continued stakeholder sensitisation to promote conservation.

Moderator: What are the impacts of oil exploitation on the tourism sector?

Ms. Nabiruma noted that if Uganda is not careful, oil exploitation may affect the agricultural sector as well as fishing and tourism industries.

She shared the experience she got when AFIEGO was facilitated by its partners to visit oil-producing countries such as Ecuador, Nigeria and the United States of America. She noted that in all these countries, they found that communities were suffering due to failure to conserve the environment amidst oil and gas exploitation activities. Failure to conserve nature led to a decline in the number of tourists in some countries.

She added that in Nigeria, oil companies made empty promises. They promised to create jobs but these are not gotten by many locals. They also promised to conserve the Niger Delta but they did not. She said that this could happen to Murchison Falls National Park where oil production is expected to happen.

She also said that water and soil could be contaminated due to oil exploitation. This would hurt animals, thereby affecting tourism.

Ms. Nabiruma also pointed out that even human beings are affected by oil contamination. She said that when water and land is contaminated and people eat food from contaminated soils, it may lead to premature births, increased diseases such as cancer and high crime rates like kidnapping and theft.

Ms. Nabiruma appealed to the people to be vigilant so that oil exploitation does not destroy nature and the lives of the people like it did in Nigeria.

3.0. Feedback from call-in listeners

Mr. Vincent Aliguma thanked the guests and he criticised the government for being behind the destruction of Bugoma forest. He asked some questions like: why do they punish people for killing the animals yet there are no penalties for animals killing people? Also, why is Bunyoro Kingdom

silent on wildlife management? He concluded by saying that it is Bunyoro Kingdom that sold Bugoma forest.

Mr. Byaruhunga said that if oil extraction is spoiling nature, then what is wrong with leaving it in the ground?

Mr. Friday from Kikuube noted that three parties are involved in the destruction of Bugoma forest: Bunyoro Kingdom, Hoima Sugar Limited and the Office of the Prime Minister (refugees). He added that given the fact that the president appointed Hon. Robinah Nabbanja to be the prime minister, she should fight for Bugoma forest and Bunyoro at large.

Mr. Steven from Kyagwali said that government and Bunyoro Kingdom are responsible for the destruction of Bugoma forest. He also said that Bunyoro Kingdom is stopping locals from doing small-scale farming but allowing Hoima Sugar who are doing massive destruction.

4.0. Responses

Ms. Nabiruma said that government is responsible for deciding whether oil should be left in the ground or not.

Mr. Ntale said that Bugoma forest should be put under the management of Uganda Wildlife Authority (UWA) as it is responsible for animal protection.

5.0. Conclusion

Mr. Ntale extended his appreciation to the listeners and asked people to join them in the struggle to save Bugoma forest from destruction. Ms. Nabiruma said that AFIEGO has offices in Hoima at Muganwa house and in Buliisa town. She said that communities that need AFIEGO's services can engage the organisation through those offices.

6.0. Participants

No.	Name	Sex	Org	Contact
1.	Ben Ntale	M	ACBF	ben@apetreks.com
2.	Apollo Rwamparo	M	BKK, Tourism Minister	jrwamparo@gmail.com
3.	Diana Nabiruma	F	AFIEGO	dnabiruma@afiego.org
4.	Johnson Kanyesige	M	Spice FM (Moderator)	