

February 2024; Issue 2

GOV'T, CNOOC & TOTAL MUST PROTECT FISHERFOLK'S LIVELIHOODS FROM OIL PROJECT IMPACTS



A fisherman and fishing boats on the shores of Lake Albert. Fisherfolk operating on the lake in the Bunyoro sub-region report that their fishing livelihoods have been affected by Total and CNOOC's Tilenga and Kingfisher oil projects respectively.

Photo credit: Andrew Bogrand

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Dear reader, welcome to AFIEGO's February 2024 newsletter. This month and in 2023, AFIEGO and our partners held a number of engagements with fisherfolk operating on Lake Albert in Uganda and the Indian Ocean in Tanzania. Through the engagements, we discussed the impact that the Lake Albert oil project has had on fisherfolk.

The above project consists of the Tilenga, Kingfisher and East African Crude Oil Pipeline (EACOP) in Uganda and Tanzania.

Our engagements showed that the fisherfolk, who include fishermen, fishmongers, divers and others involved in the fisheries value chain in Uganda and Tanzania, have suffered various impacts because of the aforementioned oil projects.

Among others, the fisherfolk report that environmental pollution, poor oil waste management, noise and light pollution from drilling rigs, loss of access to fishing grounds, oil-induced population influx and others have had a negative impact on their livelihoods.

They also report that biodiversity such as water ducks that are key to supporting their fish trade have been affected by the Lake Albert oil activities.

The fisherfolk's stories, which are being shared for the first time through this newsletter, raise an alarm that should awaken Ugandan and Tanzanian policy makers, as well as the oil companies that are operating

the Lake Albert oil project.

The above stakeholders should take measures to protect not only fisherfolk's livelihoods but also the fisheries sector, as it is important to Uganda's economy.

Employing **over 5 million** people and contributing **3%** to Uganda's GDP, the fisheries sector is an important one. The Lake Albert fisheries are also important as combined with Lake Victoria, the lakes accounted for **82.9%** of Uganda's fish catch in 2018. These are the latest available statistics on Uganda's various lakes' contribution to the country's fisheries.

Needless to say, the Lake Albert fisheries, and the fisherfolk that operate on the lake, need to be protected.

In our **Word from CEO** in this newsletter, we share stories by fisherfolk who highlight how the Lake Albert oil project has affected their livelihoods. We make recommendations that the Ugandan government should implement to protect the fishers.

In our **pictorial**, we share pictorial highlights of our February and January 2024 activities. For instance, we share pictorial highlights from four meetings that we held with oil-affected and Bugoma forest host communities to plan for 2024.

In addition, we share highlights from a radio talkshow and online exchange learning that we organised for fisherfolk to strengthen

them to defend their rights amidst the Tilenga, Kingfisher and EACOP oil projects.

Furthermore, we share pictorial highlights from the hearing of a case that we and our partners filed challenging the EACOP at the East African Court of Justice (EACJ).

We also share highlights from meetings that we held with oil-affected communities that filed court cases in Uganda to strategise on how to fast-track hearing of their cases in 2024.

In our **lobbying** section, we bring you some of the lobby and advocacy products that we and our partners disseminated in February and January 2024.

Among others, we supported Tilenga oil project-affected communities to write to the Minister of Justice and Constitutional Affairs, the Chief Justice, Deputy Chief Justice, Uganda Law Society and others to request for meetings.

The communities filed cases between 2014 and 2023 challenging the human and environmental rights violations committed by the government and oil companies.

The cases are yet to be heard or concluded by the judiciary. However, the same judiciary concluded, in four days, a case filed by the government of Uganda against 42 Tilenga oil project-affected households in December 2023.

The communities want to engage in dialogue with the judiciary and other stakeholders to promote a pro-poor judiciary in Uganda.

Further, we and our partners issued press statements to inform the public about the hearing of our case challenging the EACOP project that we filed at the EACJ.

We also joined our Inclusive Green Economy Network-East Africa (IGEN-EA) partners to issue IEC materials to mark World Wetlands Day.

In **the media** section, we bring you some of the media stories that were published from our work or were written by our staff and partners in February 2024.

We hope you enjoy the newsletter.

Editorial team:

Diana Nabiruma

Jenan Apio

Balach Bakundane

Rachael Amongin

TALES FROM LAKE ALBERT & THE INDIAN OCEAN: HOW FISHERFOLK HAVE BEEN AFFECTED BY THE LAKE ALBERT OIL PROJECT

Stephen O., 29, is a fisherman operating on Lake Albert. He has worked on the lake since he was 15 years old.

"I started fishing while I was in school. My father was a fisherman but the money he was getting was not enough to meet the needs of the entire family. I decided to join him so that I could make some money. Every day before I went to school, I would first go and fish and then head to class," Stephen, who lives in Kikuube district in Western Uganda, says.

He adds, "I became a fisherman because fishing is the only alternative we have in my village. We don't have gardens. If one needs school fees or capital to start a business, one needs to engage in fishing."

OIL EXPLOITATION IMPACTS IN UGANDA

Like the other over **15,420** fishers that make a living off Lake Albert in Uganda, Stephen, who lives in China National Offshore Oil Corporation's (CNOOC) Kingfisher oil project area, says that life was good before oil exploitation activities started on Lake Albert.

"With oil came some problems," Stephen says. Some of these challenges include the fact that the seismic blasting that was seen during the oil exploration phase hurt fishermen's **access** to fish.

"Oil waste also was not managed

well during the oil exploration phase in some instances. Some waste was dumped at Kyabasambo village in Kikuube district and some of it run off into lagoons that are connected to Lake Albert. We used to get fish from the Luzira Nsonga lagoon for instance but when it was polluted by oil waste, we can no longer access fish from that lagoon."

Like Stephen, Seremos K. says that fisherfolk in Buliisa district, where TotalEnergies is operating, have been affected by oil activities covering Lake Albert.

"We have this problem of flood waters that run from Total's Central Processing Facility Area that is under construction into Lake Albert. The waters pollute the lake and make access to clean water for fisherfolk difficult.

You know a lot of fisherfolk rely on water from Lake Albert to meet their water needs. Without clean water, fisherfolk's health can be negatively impacted and if a fisherman is not healthy, he cannot work well," Seremos, who runs an organisation called Uganda Fisheries and Fish Conservation Association (UFFCA) that advocates for fishermen's wellbeing, says.

He also says that when the communities challenge the oil companies and government to stop the negative impacts of oil on communities, the communities get threatened with arrests and others.

Water contamination is not the only challenge that is affecting fisherfolk due to the oil and gas exploitation activities. Light and noise pollution is as well.

In January 2023, president Yoweri Kaguta Museveni launched oil drilling activities for the Kingfisher oil project that is operated by CNOOC on Lake Albert. Fisherfolk say that the noise and light from the drilling rig have caused them some challenges.

"I am a diver and my work involves arranging the fishing nets beneath water after the fishermen have set them to catch fish. However, I and other divers have issues with the oil rig which vibrates, with the vibrations being felt within Lake Albert. The vibrations affect our ears and when we leave the lake, we feel like our ears are ringing," Ismail T. says.

The fishers are afraid that they will suffer long term impacts to their hearing due to the vibrations from the drilling rig. The fishers also observe that since the drilling rig in the Kingfisher oil project area began operations, communities suffer from more respiratory diseases.

"That rig releases smoke [emissions]. We suspect that they are the cause of our poor respiratory health," Imran O., a fisher, says.

Studies have shown that populations living near oil and gas sites experience more respiratory and pulmonary health challenges.

Fumes, toxic chemicals and

emissions of toxic particulate matter as well as carbon monoxide, nitrous oxide, ozone and volatile organic compounds (VOCs) have been **implicated** in driving the health challenges.

While the fishermen are struggling with water contamination and other forms of pollution, fish mongers, majority of whom are women, are struggling too.

Sifa K. from Buliisa district says, "This oil in Buliisa has been a curse to us. Too many people, especially those with money, came to our district.

They started engaging in fish trade. Because they have money, they are able to buy fish at higher prices than we would be able to. They increased the price of fish and pushed those of us with little money out of the trade."

Sifa also says that some community members who were traditionally farmers and lost their land to the Tilenga oil project without adequate compensation resorted to fishing, putting pressure on other traders.



The Tilenga, Kingfisher and EACOP oil projects have affected fishers. Some of the fishers are also among the families that were displaced for the Kingfisher and Tilenga oil projects. Some were sued by the Ugandan government to compel them to take low compensation for their land.

EACOP IMPACTS IN TANZANIA

In Tanzania, fisherfolk say that they have also been affected by the East African Crude Oil Pipeline (EACOP) project activities.

"We can no longer fish in the areas near the shores where the EACOP construction activities are ongoing. We use small traditional boats, which are propelled by wind, to fish. We therefore prefer to fish near the shores.

Now that we cannot, some fisherfolk have been forced to relocate to other landing sites," Bausi, a Tanzanian fisherman, says.

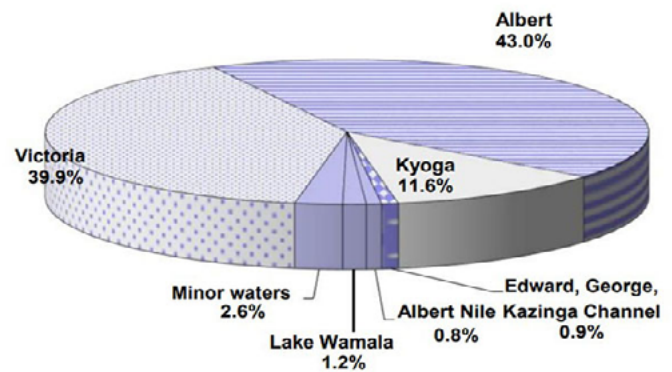
Halima*, a Tanzanian fishmonger, says that because fishermen have to fish further away from the shores, access to fish is limited, which pushes up fish prices and affects women's ability to participate in the fish trade.

IMPORTANCE OF FISHING INDUSTRY

The fishing industry is important to Uganda's economy. Employing over **5 million** people through direct and indirect jobs, the sector earned Uganda over USD 509.7 million (**UGX 1.968 trillion**) in 2022. The sector also contributes **3%** to Uganda's GDP and **12%** to the country's agricultural GDP.

The Lake Albert fisheries are important to Uganda's fish sector earnings. In 2018 for instance, the sector contributed **43%** of Uganda's fish catch. It is therefore imperative that the Lake Albert fisheries, and fisherfolk that make a living off the lake, are protected.

Proportion of fish catch by water body, 2018



Source: Uganda Bureau of Statistics

RECOMMENDATIONS

To protect the Lake Albert fisheries and fisherfolk, the following must be done:

(i) The Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Industries and Fisheries (MAAIF) plus independent groups including representatives of civil society, religious leaders, affected community leaders and others should undertake a comprehensive investigation to determine the existing and potential impact of the Tilenga, Kingfisher and EACOP oil projects on the Lake Albert fisheries to immediately stop the existing injustices and violations on host communities and prevent the potential ones;

(ii) Further, as part of the above investigations, MAAIF should work with the Ministry of Water and Environment (MWE) plus independent observers to assess the magnitude of the impact that the Kingfisher drilling rig, water runoff and floods from the Tilenga CPF Area, the eviction court orders against oil affected communities and other oil activities are having on Lake Albert and fishers.

The ministry together with the independent observers should ensure that the findings are used to take action

against all those engaged in oil activities that negatively impact people and critical ecosystems such as Lake Albert.

(iii) In addition, communities report that biodiversity such as water ducks that used to indicate where fish could be found have become scarcer since oil exploitation activities commenced on Lake Albert.

The MWE should form a taskforce with the leaders of fishing communities to investigate these claims and use the findings to stop all oil activities that continue to destroy biodiversity in and around Lake Albert.

(iv) More so, the government should put in place measures to protect fisherfolk and vulnerable groups such as children and women taking into account their special needs such as education, clean water, food for children and mothers, and others.

(v) Further, the government should stop using courts to obtain court orders in four days of filing cases to evict oil-affected people who resist against oil injustices.

The Judicial Service Commission (JSC) should use its powers under the Constitution of Uganda to ensure that the High Court stops issuing eviction orders before giving oil-affected people a right to be heard while the court of appeal should be asked to urgently fix, hear and conclude all the appeals filed by the oil-affected communities including fishing communities. Some appeals were filed in 2021 but remain unheard to date.

(vi) Finally, the Tilenga, Kingfisher and EACOP oil activities should stop until the above-mentioned investigations are completed and action taken to protect fisherfolk and communities against oil injustices.

**Dickens Kamugisha
CEO, AFIEGO**



Some Ugandan fisherfolk who operate on Lake Albert during some of the engagements that AFIEGO had with fisherfolk in November 2023

Pictorial of our activities

AFIEGO AND PARTNERS PROSECUTE EACOP CASE AT THE EAST AFRICAN COURT OF JUSTICE

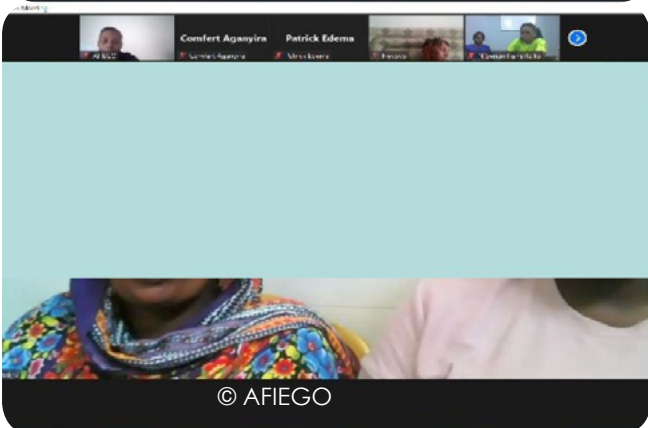


On February 20, 2024, AFIEGO and our civil society partners participated in the hearing of an appeal challenging the EACOP project that we filed at the East African Court of Justice (EACJ).

The appeal arose out of a November 2023 ruling in which the First Instance division of the EACJ dismissed a case that we and our partners filed in November 2020. The case is aimed at protecting the human and environmental rights of East Africans as well as fostering climate action among others.

During the hearing, the EACJ ordered AFIEGO, our partners and the governments of Uganda and Tanzania as well as the Secretary General of the East African Community (EAC) to file the submissions that we will use to argue the case. All the submissions should have been filed by May 2024.

AFIEGO SUPPORTS EXCHANGE LEARNING FOR OIL-AFFECTED FISHERFOLK



On February 15, 2024, AFIEGO and our Tanzanian, Nigerian and South African partners held an online exchange learning for fisherfolk from Uganda, Tanzania, Nigeria, and South Africa.

The main objective of the exchange learning was to enhance Ugandan and Tanzanian fisherfolk's capacity to defend their livelihoods amidst the Lake Albert oil project.

This was done through experience sharing and solidarity building. South African and Nigerian fisherfolk shared their experiences and tactics that they use to protect their livelihoods amidst oil activities in their countries.

AFIEGO SUPPORTS OIL-AFFECTED FISHERFOLK TO USE THE MEDIA TO ADVOCATE FOR THEIR RIGHTS



In addition, on February 15, 2024, AFIEGO supported fisherfolk from Bullisa and Kikuube district in Uganda to participate in a radio talkshow at Spice FM in Hoima district.

During the radio talkshow, the fisherfolk discussed the impact of the Lake Albert oil project activities on their livelihoods. It is hoped that such discussions will foster dialogue or create pressure to restore the fisherfolk's livelihoods.

AFIEGO HOLDS MEETINGS WITH OIL-AFFECTED COMMUNITIES TO DISCUSS THEIR COURT CASES



In January 2024, AFIEGO held meetings with oil refinery and Tilenga project-affected communities to discuss strategies that can be used to fasttrack hearing of the cases that the communities filed against the Ugandan government.

The cases were filed in Uganda's High Court and Court of Appeal in 2014, 2021 and 2023 to stop payment of delayed, inadequate and unfair compensation to communities. The cases are also aimed at stopping the displacement of communities without adequate compensation.

The community members that participated in the meetings agreed on strategies to use to promote justice.



AFIEGO AND PARTNERS TRAIN WOMEN AND YOUTH ON CLEAN ENERGY ALTERNATIVES



In January 2024, AFIEGO held planning meetings with forest and oil host communities in Kikuube and Bullisa districts. During the meetings, the communities set their key priorities for 2024 and strategies that they will use to meet them.

Lobbying

In February 2024, AFIEGO and our partners issued press statements to inform the public about the hearing of our case challenging the EACOP project that we filed at the East African Court of Justice (EACJ). We also supported oil-affected communities in Uganda to write to over five offices of the judiciary. The communities requested for meetings to foster dialogue to promote a pro-poor people judiciary.



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
KAMPALA, NAIROBI & ZANZIBAR

February 19, 2024

EAST AFRICAN COURT OF JUSTICE TO HEAR APPEAL AGAINST EACOP PROJECT TOMORROW

The Appellate Division of the East African Court of Justice (EACJ) will tomorrow, February 20, 2024, hear an appeal that four East African civil society organisations (CSOs) filed in relation to the East African Crude Oil Pipeline (EACOP) project.

The organisations include Africa Institute for Energy Governance (AFIEGO)-Uganda, Center for Food and Adequate Living Rights (CEFROHT)-Uganda, Natural Justice (NJ)-Kenya and Centre for Strategic Litigation (CSL)-Tanzania.

The organisations filed the appeal following a November 2023 ruling in which the Court of First Instance at the EACJ dismissed a case through which AFIEGO, CEFROHT, NJ and CSL sought injunctions to stop development of the EACOP, a 1443 km crude oil pipeline that is supposed to be constructed from Uganda to Tanzania.

The organisations argued that the EACOP violates key East African and international treaties as well as laws relating to human rights protection, environmental and biodiversity conservation, climate change mitigation and the protection of Lake Victoria, among others.

On the 29th of November 2023 however, the EACJ Court of First Instance ruled that the court could not hear the case on its merits because the court lacks jurisdiction and that the case was filed out of time. This was a disappointing outcome leading to the organisations choosing to appeal.

The dismissal was prompted by a preliminary objection raised by the Solicitor General of Tanzania, asserting that the court lacked jurisdiction to entertain the case and that it was time-barred.

In their appeal, the organisations will argue that the First Instance Court erred in its ruling. The organisations hope that the Appellate Division of the EACJ will reverse the ruling and choose to hear the case on its merits.

Mr. Dickens Kamugisha, the CEO of AFIEGO, says, "We remain resolute in our pursuit of justice through the East African Court of Justice and other courts. Millions of East Africans hope that the court will make a decision that will protect their socio-economic and environmental rights

Justice Benjamin Kibito,
The Chairperson,
Judicial Service Commission,
Kampala-Uganda



February 7, 2024

Dear Sir,

RE: REQUEST TO MEET YOU OVER THE FAILURES OF THE HOIMA HIGH COURT JUDGE AND OTHER INJUSTICES BY COURTS

The above refers

We the under-listed Tilenga oil Project Affected Persons (PAPs) of Bulisa district request to meet you and discuss how to stop our suffering caused by Justice Jesse Byaruhanga and other courts.

On December 8, 2023, Justice Jesse Byaruhanga as the head of the Hoima High Court ruled that compensation of 42 households whose land is being acquired for the Tilenga oil project could be deposited with the court. This ruling was delivered without allowing us to file our defense, to get a lawyer and to be represented. The case was filed on December 4, 2023 and after four days of filing of the case and a single hearing of the case, the Judge ruled that we can be evicted from our land before payment of fair and adequate compensation contrary to Article 26 of the Ugandan Constitution.

It is on that note that we would like to discuss the precedents being created by the court to punish the oil-affected communities. The meeting will also help us to discuss issues of delayed justice which is causing untold suffering to the oil-affected communities and discuss how to ensure that the courts do not facilitate injustice against innocent people. In other words, we want justice from the courts.

We applied to have CIVIL APPLICATION NO. 191 OF 2021 ARISING FROM MISCELLANEOUS CAUSE NO. 0025, HAPPY IGNATIUS & 13 OTHERS VERSUS ATTORNEY GENERAL for an extension of time to appeal out of time and a memorandum of appeal in 2021 but up to date, the Court of Appeal has never set a hearing for our case. These injustices by the court have continued to facilitate acts of land grabbing and the destruction of our families.

Therefore, the main objective of this letter is to request you for a meeting to present a petition on the injustices caused by the judiciary on February 12, 2024, at 10 am at your offices or any other date, time and venue of your convenience.

Thank you in advance for accepting our request.

Yours faithfully,



NATURAL JUSTICE
0414257525
February 8, 2024

Hon. minister,
Gen. Jeje Odongo Abubaker,
Ministry of Foreign Affairs
P.O. Box 7048, Kampala-Uganda

Dear Sir,

RE: THE POSITION OF UGANDA REGARDING ITS STATE SUBMISSION TO THE ICI CONCERNING THE ADVISORY OPINION ON OBLIGATIONS OF STATES IN RESPECT OF CLIMATE CHANGE

1. We address you as representatives of Africa Institute for Energy Governance (AFIEGO), and the Environmental Lawyers Collective for Africa ("ELCA") currently housed under Natural Justice.¹ AFIEGO is a Ugandan incorporated company limited by guarantee for non-profit whose main objective is to promote energy policies that benefit the poor and vulnerable communities in Uganda and the Great Lakes Region.

¹ Natural Justice is a nonprofit organisation (NPO registration number 057-611-NPO), established in 2007, which specialises in human rights and environmental law in Africa. Natural Justice is currently headquartered in South Africa with a registered office in Merventide Building, 53 Hout Street, Cape Town, 8008, South Africa. ELCA is a collective of African lawyers who are committed to the use of law and their legal expertise as a vehicle for the realisation of environmental justice. ELCA's members advocate for a halt on the exploitation of the continent's Africa's forest, gas and mineral resources as this is often at the expense of indigenous communities and the landscape of championing justice through resource allocation, policy drafting, publications as well as training and awareness to address environmental and climate injustice.

Hon. Nobilet Mwa,
The Minister,
Justice and Constitutional Affairs,
Kampala-Uganda



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Regarding the Court of Appeal as part of the entire judiciary, Judge Justice Jesse Byaruhanga while still at Masindi High Court in 2020 ruled against us in a case filed by the government. In his ruling, he stated that government was free to deposit the rejected compensation money with the court and then proceed to evict the oil affected people/defendants. He also ruled that no liability would be brought against the government as a result of eviction. How does a court stop an aggrieved person or people from taking action against a party in breach?

We applied to have CIVIL APPLICATION NO. 191 OF 2021 ARISING FROM MISCELLANEOUS CAUSE NO. 0025, HAPPY IGNATIUS & 13 OTHERS VERSUS ATTORNEY GENERAL for an extension of time to appeal out of time and a memorandum of appeal in 2021 but up to date, the Court of Appeal has never set a hearing for our case. These injustices by the court have continued to facilitate acts of land grabbing and the destruction of our families.



ORGANIZATION FOR
COMMUNITY
ENGAGEMENT (OCE)



FISHERFOLK VS OIL EXTRACTION

An online exchange to strengthen Ugandan & Tanzanian fisherfolk to defend their rights amidst the Tilenga, Kingfisher & EACOP oil projects

WHEN: February 15, 2024

TIME: 2pm EAT/ 1pm SAST/ 12 noon Nigerian time

WHERE: Zoom



www.afiego.org

This month, AFIEGO staff, research associates and youth champions wrote newspaper articles that were published in the leading newspapers. Some of the published articles are captured below.

Let's care for our wetlands



First, I want to take this opportunity to thank the government for the good work they are doing concerning wetland conservation.

On Friday January 2, 2024, the world celebrated wetlands day with the theme of "Wetland Restoration" which highlights the urgent need to prioritise wetland restoration. World Wetlands Day is very important because it is a reminder of the vital role wetlands play not only for countless ecosystems and wildlife but also human life.

Wetlands are amazing natural water filtration systems which trap natural sediment and organic matter and filter out pollutants from rain and storm water runoff such as toxic metals and fertilisers from industrial and agricultural activity.

It is noted that African wetlands include some of the most productive ecosystems in the world, which are an important as they host important animal and in many cases it is the exclusive source of natural resources upon which rural economies depend on to provide food and energy, medicine, building material, dry season grazing and transportation for large human populations. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) studies shows that wetlands currently cover 5.5 percent of the land in the 48 contiguous states and an estimated 95 percent of these wetlands are freshwater and the rest are marine or estuarine.

However, much wetlands are among the most important natural resources and being among some of the world's most valuable and diverse ecosystem, they are disappearing faster than forests.

Human activities like agriculture, dam construction, industrialisation and settlement purposes, among others due to increased population characterised by land shortage and weather variation are said to continue posing a threat on wetlands and cause loss by changing water quality, quantity and flow rates, increasing pollutant inputs and changing species composition as a result of disturbance and the introduction of non-native species.

According to the United Nation Development Programme (UNDP), it is noted that around 35 percent of the world's wetlands, which include lakes, rivers, marshes, and peatlands, as well as coastal and marine areas like lagoons, mangroves and coral reefs have been lost since 1970 and around 87 percent of global wetland loss occurred in the 20th century and the rate of loss continues. Uganda had approximately 30,000km² of wetlands by 2000 but this has since reduced to around 22,500km² implying a 25 percent loss in the past two decades and this loss is said to have occurred due to human activities.

Wetlands are full of biodiversity serving as a home of plant and animal species including many that are endangered such as birds, amphibians, fish and all sorts of mammals and insects that rely upon wetlands for survival and it is noted that a quarter of these animals and plants who take wetlands as a home are at risk of becoming extinct, which is unfortunate.

Therefore, there is a need to consider taking more of an active role and putting in more efforts to safeguard our planet by protecting our wetlands in order not to put ourselves at

Protect wetlands from human activities



World Wetlands Day is celebrated each year on February 2. The commemoration raises awareness and increases people's understanding of the critical importance of wetlands.

This year the world wetlands will be celebrated under the theme "Wetlands and Human Wellbeing", human beings have depended on wetlands for centuries, drawing sustenance, inspiration and resilience from these important environments.

Many wetlands, particularly those near cities, have been polluted by human activities, for example River Rwizi in Mbarara District has been choked by plastics and this has led to river clogging. In addition, according to research, an estimated 35 percent of the world's wetlands have been lost since 1970.

Around 87 percent of global wetland loss occurred in the 20th Century, and the rate of loss continues. Uganda had approximately 30,000km² of wetlands by 2000 but this area has since reduced to around 22,500km² implying a 25 percent loss in the past two decades.

Despite the numerous benefits that humans receive from wetlands, every day wetlands are damaged by human beings. Wetlands are being destroyed by unsustainable agricultural practices take an example of Rice that is being grown in Rwela along Masaka road this has led to flooding which threatens the lives of people living in the same area. Other activities include, stream channelization, dam construction, discharge of industrial wastes and municipal sewage and runoff urban and agricultural areas.

Current trends in human settlement also pose a major threat to the conservation and wise use of wetlands in and near growing cities. It is noted that, as cities grow, demand for land increases, the tendency is to encroach on wetlands and these are disappearing three times faster than forests. For example the Nakivubo wetland which is a vital component of Kampala's drainage has been highly affected by plastic pollution.

Therefore this year's celebration should be extended to communities because communities can lead efforts to check how wetlands are used in their local areas and participate in clearing the rubbish that is often dumped there as well as unblocking the streams from which the get water.

Last but not list, as we celebrate this day, I call upon the government to put the following under consideration; the government should intervene and designate wetlands as protected areas, restore degraded wetlands, partner with local communities and civil societies to create awareness



Restore wetlands as they host important animal and plant life. Wetlands also make critical contributions to human survival

Hold financial institutions accountable for financing fossil fuels



On February 5, the *Daily Monitor* reported that a total of 28 insurers pulled out from financing EACOP projects following pressure from climate activists who argue that the project poses significant pollution and human risks.

The insurance firms include Riverstone, Sirius point international, Enstary group, Blenheim SA Meacock among others. However it's noted that some insurance firms like AIG, Tokio Marine Chaucer and Hiscox have insisted on financing the project regardless of its negative effects on both human life and the environment.

It's noted that the project is likely to cause more harm to the environment if insurers inject money in it. Additionally this project is likely to displace more than 100,000 households, a thing that will cause food insecurity, domestic violence, school dropouts and many other related factors.

In addition this project is going to significantly contribute to the climate crisis, and also pose serious environmental and social risks to protected wildlife areas, water sources and communities throughout Uganda and Tanzania.

Furthermore, extraction at the oilfield in Albertine Graben will jeopardize the Murchison Falls National Park, which is important for tourism as Uganda's second most visited national park, and Lake Albert, the most important resource for Uganda's fishing industry.

The pipeline also risks polluting Africa's largest lake, Lake Victoria, which roughly 40 million people in the region rely upon for drinking water, household use, and food production.

Away from environmental concerns, it is noted that the Ugandan government has \$25 billion in debts, 80 percent of which has been accumulated during the time when it's been pursuing oil projects, and this is likely to lower its standards and offer attractive terms because it is heavily indebted.

Additionally, the economic viability of the EACOP is also in question because with the current global shift towards renewable energy sources there is a risk that the demand for crude oil could decline in the coming years, making EACOP economically unfeasible.

In September 2022, the European Parliament passed an emergency resolution condemning the EACOP project, calling for an immediate end to extractive activities in protected and sensitive ecosystems, including the shores of Lake Albert.

During the COP28 Summit that took place in Dubai in November 2023, nations acknowledged the necessity of transitioning from fossil fuels and the importance of financial institutions investing in clean energy.



Healthy wetlands, healthy people. Let's cherish our wetlands for a healthier Uganda

Upcoming events

March 1, 2024; Bunyoro, Greater Masaka and Kampala: Support oil project-affected communities and youth to engage insurers on oil project impacts and risks

March 4, 2024; Kampala: Organise a multi-stakeholder meeting to plan for a community visioning exercise on the energy that communities want

March 11-30, 2024; Greater Masaka: Support research on the tourism opportunities in Greater Masaka

March 15, 2024; Kampala: Commission research on the impact of oil activities on forest landscapes such as Murchison Falls National Park

March 20, 2024; Hoima: Organise community sensitisation meetings on Uganda's Energy Transition Plan

March 27, 2024; Kampala: Support fisherfolk to petition oil companies to address the impacts of oil activities on their livelihoods

March 29, 2024; Kampala: Support community petitions to NEMA to take action on her directive to Hoima sugar Ltd on restoration of Bugoma forest

March 30, 2024; Buliisa: Conduct a meeting with oil affected communities to discuss impacts of court eviction orders

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