GOV’T, ADDRESS OIL-INDUCED LAND GRABBING & HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS IN BULIISA AND OTHER DISTRICTS!

AFIEGO staff and community members during legal aid clinics organised by AFIEGO in Tilenga- and EACOP-affected districts in June and July 2023.

Community members sought legal advice to address oil-induced land grabbing among other human rights violations.

In this newsletter:
- Government must address oil-induced land grabbing and its impacts in Buliisa district
- Pictorial of our activities
- Lobbying
- In the media
- Upcoming events
Dear reader, welcome to AFIEGO’s July 2023 newsletter. In June and July 2023, AFIEGO organised legal aid clinics in Buliisa, Lwengo and Kyotera districts in Western and Southern Uganda.

The objective of the clinics was to help AFIEGO’s lawyers to meet communities affected by the East African Crude Oil Pipeline (EACOP) and Tilenga oil projects, listen to their grievances and offer legal advice.

The legal aid clinics were also intended to empower selected local community leaders and individuals to become advocates of their own rights and those of fellow community members.

During the clinics, community members discussed the human rights violations caused by TotalEnergies’ Tilenga project and the EACOP project.

The EACOP is owned by TotalEnergies, China National Offshore Oil Corporation (CNOOC) and the Ugandan as well as Tanzanian governments.

Some of the violations that were discussed include cracked houses due to vibrations from oil sector construction activities, plans to construct the EACOP a few metres from people’s houses which raises safety concerns and titling of community members’ land by strangers.

Others include slow processes of compensating landlords in Greater Masaka, failure to get informed consent from EACOP-affected communities and increased human-wildlife conflicts that have seen elephants destroy crops in Buliisa district. The issue of human-wildlife conflicts was especially emotive.

It should be remembered that during the public hearing on the Tilenga oil project’s Environmental and Social Impact Assessment (ESIA) report in Nwoya district in 2018, communities in Nwoya indicated that they started to experience more elephant raids when oil exploitation activities in Murchison Falls National Park (MFNP) started.

Indeed, a study by the Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS) on the impacts of oil and gas exploration and seismic surveys on elephants in MFNP showed that elephants were reacting negatively to the oil developments.

The “elephants were shown to move away from well pad sites while under construction and when they were being drilled."

In our Word from CEO, we bring you stories from our legal aid clinics. We place emphasis on the oil-induced land grabbing and other associated problems in Buliisa district which the Ministry of Lands, TotalEnergies and other relevant stakeholders should address.

We also invite Ugandans to demand that relevant actors including TotalEnergies, Uganda Wildlife Authority (UWA), NEMA, Ministry of Energy, Petroleum Authority of Uganda (PAU) and the judiciary among others stop oil sector impacts and injustices.
In this newsletter, we also bring you our pictorial section through which we share some of the activities that we and our partners implemented this month.

For instance, we bring you highlights from the aforementioned July legal aid clinics.

In addition, we supported youth to engage in an exchange learning with oil-affected communities in Hoima district. The youth got a physical feel of the impacts of oil on communities.

Further, with oil-affected community members, we held a radio talkshow at Spice FM in Hoima district to discuss the emerging issues affecting oil-affected communities.

We also discussed AFIEGO’s legal efforts especially those in Uganda, at the East African Court of Justice (EACJ) and in France. These are aimed at protecting communities and East Africans’ rights amidst the Tilenga, Kingfisher and EACOP projects.

This month, AFIEGO also conducted a staff capacity building workshop on project monitoring and gender mainstreaming in Kampala.

The Court of Appeal in Kampala also heard the court case that we and our partners filed for protection of Bugoma forest.

You will see highlights on this and our other activities in the pictorial section.

In our lobbying section, we bring you some of the lobby and advocacy products that we disseminated this month.

For instance, AFIEGO and our partners issued a press statement on the outcomes of the Bugoma court case hearing.

Further, AFIEGO and our partners submitted a joint report to inform the UN’s Universal Periodic Review on the People’s Republic of China next year.

We discussed the human rights violations associated with Chinese investments in Uganda.

In addition, AFIEGO published and launched a factsheet on the EACOP-impacted wetlands in Uganda and the socio-economic roles they play.

Finally, in in the media section, we bring you some of the over 25 newspaper articles written by our staff and partners that were published in the leading newspapers in July.

We also bring you the media stories that were published following various media engagements that we held this month.

We hope you enjoy the newsletter.

Editorial team:
Diana Nabiruma
Doreen Namara
Balach Bakundane
On July 13, 2023, Mr. Ibrahim Nyakagufu of Kabolwa village, Kigoya parish, Buliisa sub-county, Buliisa district woke up early. He had heard that AFIEGO was to hold a legal aid clinic in his district.

During the clinics that were held in Buliisa, Lwengo and Kyotera districts in June and July 2023, over 83 Tilenga- and EACOP project-affected households shared the oil projects' impacts on them with AFIEGO’s lawyers.

The lawyers discussed with the communities the different legal strategies that can be used to fight against land grabbing and other violations being faced because of oil activities.

When Mr. Nyakagufu left his home for the legal aid clinic in Buliisa, he had one problem that was giving him major trouble: that of people who had laid claim to land that several people he leads and himself have lived on for decades.

Mr. Nyakagufu, who is 59, says, “I am the chairperson of Kabolwa Agro Environment Protection Grow Farmers Group. The objective of this association is to participate in agriculture to feed our families and for commercial purposes. As a group of farmers, we have lived on and cultivated our land for decades. However, in 2021 and December 2022, we were shocked after learning that three people and institutions are claiming ownership of our land.”

The people and institutions referred to by Mr. Nyakagufu include Bunyoro Kitara Kingdom, Mr. James Wendi and Mr. Robert Mukitale. Over 50 households, who are being displaced for the Tilenga oil project, are affected by the land claims.

Mr. Nyakagufu says, “Through Atacama, Total is acquiring our land under Resettlement Action Plan 4. The land is being acquired for a feeder pipeline mobile camp, feeder pipeline Right of Way (RoW), feeder pipeline power stations and access roads.”

He adds, “Between 2021 and 2022, Atacama informed us [over 50 households] that our land had been claimed by people with land titles. Atacama told us that we would be given 60% of the value of our land in compensation while the landlords, who appeared out of nowhere, would be given 40%. Land in Buliisa is mostly owned communally.

We wondered how anyone could get a land title covering people’s land. We also asked how government allowed anyone to convert communal land and issue freehold land titles without involving the families living and occupying the same land?” Mr. Nyakagufu adds, “The affected people complained to the RDC [Resident District Commissioner].

While the RDC was supportive, we are still being told that we will only receive 60% compensation. This is unfair!”

OIL-INDUCED LAND GRABBING

Mr. Nyakagufu and his community’s land grabbing case is just one of the many being faced by families in Buliisa and other districts where TotalEnergies, CNOOC and the Ugandan government are conducting oil activities. Indeed, since commercial oil discoveries were made in the Albertine Graben
in Uganda in 2006, poor communities have continued to experience increased land grabbing challenges.

This phenomenon has been documented by various researchers some of whom define land grabbing as largescale displacement of people from their land without adequate compensation. This displacement may include that by the state and corporate entities.

Others define land grabbing as “large scale land acquisition that involves quick transfer of ownership from long time land occupants/owners to new owners/investors, in [an] unclear manner that causes suspicion and resistance from the locals …”

In 2018, the Centre for Peace Research and Development published a research paper titled, “Land Grabbing in Albertine Graben: Implications for Women’s Land Rights and Oil Industry in Uganda”. The paper showed that the oil industry was driving speculative behaviour and state-led land grabs.

The research also showed that the applications for freehold registration of land in the Albertine Graben had increased.

In Buliisa in particular, the research paper showed that claims were made by land grabbers that they bought land.

"But investigations show that [the] people land grabbers claimed to have sold to them either do not exist or never owned land. In an interview with the local council chairman of Kasenyi where [TotalEnergies’] Kasemene oil well is located, it was revealed that when the community land was sold, there was no involvement of the community, but people who had previously settled on the land are said to have sold the land," the aforementioned research paper noted.

Its authors added, “[Attempts] to investigate the sale by communities were met with hostility and violence since land grabbers who were mostly absent landlords got support from government operatives to prevent repossession of land by local residents (Muriisa, Mbabazi and Twinamastiko 2014).”

In a research report titled, “The Political economy of Land Grabbing in Oil Resource Areas: The Uganda Albertine Graben”, researcher Kizito Nyanzi notes that factors such as failure by communities to register their land due to limited awareness, lack of funds and others are driving oil-induced land grabbing in the Albertine Graben.

These factors must be addressed to stop land grabbing, which has dire impacts especially on project-affected communities.

**IMPACTS OF LAND GRABBING**

Land grabbing is affecting community members in Buliisa and other districts in various ways.

Ms. Anna Acan, a widow from Kabolwa village, Buliisa sub-county in Buliisa district says, “My late husband and I bought land in 1997. We lived freely on this land until Atacama presented us with a land title in the name of Robert Mukitale Muhemba.”
She adds, “Mr. Mukitale got the land title on April 29, 2021 and the title shows that our land is part of his estate. Mr. Mukitale says that we are his tenants. I wasn’t part of a lawsuit instituted by Mr. Mukitale against people he said were on his land some years back. I have been denied compensation by Atacama to date because of this conflict.”

Ms. Acan’s failure to receive compensation has negatively impacted her and her family. Like many other families in her community who have been denied compensation due to multiple claims by land grabbers, Ms. Acan and other families are no longer able to feed their families, take their children to school, pay for health services and meet other basic needs.

Indeed, oil-induced land grabbing has continued to force more families into desperation and hopelessness. It is also worsening the cases of domestic violence. The above challenges in Buliisa are also being experienced by EACOP-affected communities in Greater Masaka where land conflicts including amongst family members have arisen.

RECOMMENDATIONS
Uganda’s Constitution empowers all citizens to live in dignity and enjoy their rights in accordance with the law. Government and all its agencies are required to ensure compliance with the law in the country.

The EACOP- and Tilenga-affected people were living in harmony and in dignity before the oil project activities. To stop oil project impacts and protect citizens, the following must be done:

(i) The Buliisa district local government and Ministry of Lands should stop issuing land titles on communal land without and before conducting effective consultations with the affected communities and/or families.

(ii) The land acquisition processes under RAP 4 must consider only the local people who have been living on the land as the only land owners. The people emerging with land titles to cheat the poor local people should be stopped. Moreover, in 2010, President Museveni stopped issuance of land titles in Bunyoro.

(iii) District Land Boards including that of Buliisa district who have continued to connive with the rich to issue land titles before consulting the locals who live on the affected land should be investigated and punished.

(iv) Furthermore, government should conduct awareness campaigns to inform communities, especially customary and communal land owners, about their land rights and how they can defend them.

The campaigns should also counsel affected people on how to overcome a life of desperation, isolation and frustration so that they can once again live normal lives.

(v) In addition, government should support communities in the oil region to register their communal and customary land, and protect the land.

(vi) CSOs should mobilise other stakeholders to support government efforts to end the suffering of oil-affected communities as well as ensure that no oil activities are allowed in critical biodiversity areas and/or unfairly displace vulnerable groups such as women, children and others.

By CEO and Partners
AFIEGO CONDUCTS LEGAL AID CLINICS FOR EACOP AND TILENGA PROJECT-AFFECTED PERSONS AND THEIR LEADERS

On June 27 and July 13, 2023, AFIEGO organised legal aid clinics for selected EACOP and Tilenga project-affected community members and their leaders in Lwengo and Buliisa districts.

AFIEGO provided legal advice to the above-mentioned people. This will support them to defend their communities’ land, environment, livelihood and other rights that have been affected by the oil projects.

AFIEGO SUPPORTS EACOP-AFFECTED COMMUNITIES TO CONDUCT A RADIO TALKSHOW ON EMERGING HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS

On July 14, 2023, AFIEGO supported selected EACOP-affected persons from Hoima district to participate in a radio talkshow at Spice FM.

The talkshow enabled the affected people to discuss the human rights violations against them.

AFIEGO also discussed the legal efforts that the organisation is involved in to protect the affected people’s rights and promote climate action.

AFIEGO SUPPORTS AN EXCHANGE LEARNING BETWEEN YOUTH AND OIL PROJECT-AFFECTED COMMUNITIES

On July 3, 2023, AFIEGO supported youth to meet with oil project-affected communities in the Albertine region.

The exchange learning visit enabled the youth to get a physical feel of the human and environmental violations these communities are going through.

The youth also shared the campaigns and advocacy efforts they are engaged in for restoration of the affected people’s rights.
AFIEGO SUPPORTS SAFETY TRAINING FOR COMMUNITY MEMBERS

Between July 12 and 15, 2023, AFIEGO and our partners organised a safety training workshop for selected community-based leaders that we work with. The training enabled the community leaders to acquire knowledge and skills to continue doing their work amidst the shrinking civic space in the country.

AFIEGO HOLDS STAFF CAPACITY BUILDING WORKSHOP ON PROJECT MONITORING AND GENDER MAINSTREAMING

On July 21, 2023, AFIEGO conducted a capacity building workshop on project monitoring and gender mainstreaming for the organisation’s staff members in Kampala. During the workshop, the staff were equipped with skills and knowledge on project monitoring, evaluation and gender mainstreaming for effective implementation of AFIEGO’s projects.

AFIEGO AND IGEN-EA PARTNERS DISCUSS STRATEGIES FOR A RENEWABLE ENERGY CURRICULUM

On July 27, 2023, AFIEGO and her partners under the Inclusive Green Economy Network-East Africa (IGEN-EA) organised a meeting to discuss strategies they can deploy to close skills gaps in Uganda’s renewable energy sector. The discussion enabled AFIEGO and her IGEN-EA partners to agree on key steps to take to address the skills gaps.
This month, AFIEGO launched a factsheet on the EACOP-impacted wetlands in Uganda and the socio-economic roles they play. The factsheet was launched following months of research. Further, AFIEGO and our partners submitted a joint report to the UN Human Rights Council to inform the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) on China. China’s human rights record will be reviewed by selected UN member states in 2024.

In addition, following hearing of an appeal case that we and our partners filed to protect Bugoma forest from land grabbing, sugarcane growing and oil challenges, we issued a press statement.
This month, AFIEGO staff, research associates and youth champions wrote over 25 newspaper articles that were published in the leading newspapers. Some of the published articles are captured below.

**Include renewable energy syllabi in secondary, varsity curriculum**

Auditors, Ugandan government officials, and the public have expressed concern over the energy sector's lack of energy education and training. As a result, government officials have called for the integration of renewable energy syllabi into secondary and varsity curricula to ensure students are equipped with the knowledge and skills needed to address climate change and energy challenges.

**Countries must address climate change and energy challenges**

In collaboration with the Ministry of Energy and Mineral Resources, AFIEGO staff and youth champions have written articles that emphasize the importance of addressing climate change and promoting renewable energy. These articles highlight the role of renewable energy in reducing carbon emissions and mitigating the effects of climate change.

**Will ban on timber export save forests from destruction?**

EDITOR: Last week, the media reported about the ban on the export of timber, cancellation of all licences and permits in the forests in order to protect them from massive destruction. The ban on the export of timber follows a directive by President Yoweri Museveni, instructing the Prime Minister to take action to save the forests from massive destruction. It is noted that all these actions, including the presidential directive on the wetland evacuation, have been put in place to ensure that the critical green cover is conserved, but nothing has changed. They have rather led to massive destruction of the forests, wetlands and other ecosystems due to increased corruption among some government officials. There is also poor implementation by the ministries responsible to protect the environment, as well as failure of the public to use alternative renewable energy, such as solar, bio-gas and energy-saving stoves. These bans have been coming at the time when most forest covers, such as Bugoma and Zoka forest reserves are under threat by encroachers. Therefore, this ban on the export of timber is also likely not to work, because a lot is still lacking at the stage of implementation. The Government needs to do the following to ensure that the directive is implemented:

- Address the issue of corruption among government officials.
- Put in place alternative programmes to reduce the pressure on the forests from charcoal consumers.
- Increase the budget for the supervision of the ministry and other who ensure that these directives are enforceable to all groups of Ugandans.

Paul Kato
**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

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**Upcoming events**

- **August 2-10, 2023; Kampala:** Organise a CSOs’ meeting on the failures of the Bujagali dam project, issue a communique and petition the Auditor General (AG) to audit the project

- **August 7, 2023; Buliisa and Kampala:** Support Buliisa oil-affected communities to engage Uganda Wildlife Authority (UWA) and other authorities to address elephant raids

- **August 7-14, 2023; Kampala and Kikuube:** Work with lawyers to compile and file submissions in the Court of Appeal regarding the Bugoma forest case

- **August 17, 2023:** Online: Webinar to create awareness on the role of the East African Court of Justice (EACJ) in promoting human rights observance, biodiversity conservation and climate action

- **August 20, 2023; Kampala:** Organise a capacity building meeting on how Ugandan CSOs can participate and influence the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) process for the People’s Republic of China

- **August 22, 2023; Kampala:** Engage the National Curriculum Development Centre (NCDC) on the need to put in place a renewable energy curriculum

- **August 23, 2023; Kampala:** Engage the Secretary General (SG) of the International Ramsar Committee and Chinese government officials on EACOP-affected wetlands

- **August 25, 2023; Kampala:** Petition the EACJ on the need to expedite hearing of the EACOP case

- **August 28, 2023; Kikuube:** Organise a meeting with Bugoma forest host communities on the roles and responsibilities of women and youth in the promotion of inclusive sustainable forest governance

- **August 30, 2023; Kampala:** Support IGEN-EA to present proposals for the Consumer Protection Bill (focus on the agricultural sector) to the Minister of Trade