

The ENERGIZER

AFIEGO's Monthly Newsletter



March 2021; Issue 3

UGANDA'S OIL PROJECTS: ENVIRONMENTAL & CLIMATE CHANGE RISKS TO PEOPLE, THE ECONOMY MUST BE FACTORED INTO FID PROCESSES



President Yoweri Museveni and his then-Tanzanian counterpart, the late John Pombe Magufuli, signing documents related to the EACOP project. The Final Investment Decision (FID) to enable oil production and development of the EACOP was expected this month (March). It was deferred to April following Magufuli's death.



While the FID is expected in April 2021, the environmental and climate change risks of the EACOP, Tilenga and Kingfisher oil projects to people and the Ugandan economy have not been adequately assessed.

This assessment must be done before any FID is made.

In this newsletter:

- Oil projects' FID: Risks to people and Uganda's economy must be factored into decision-making
- Pictorial of our activities
- Lobbying
- In the media
- Upcoming events

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Mungulasingo: that's the Luganda name for the month of March. The month was named so as in March, farmers bought seeds for sowing at the start of the March to May rains.

The rains must have been considered a blessing, so much so that a month was named to signify their importance.

Fast forward to today: rains bring trepidation in some quarters. This is evidenced by the fact that when the March 2021 rains started, Kampala Capital City Authority (KCCA) issued a statement with a strong warning: the rains were expected to submerge roads and to "collapse aged infrastructure".

KCCA may not have said it but rain in Kampala and Uganda can mean death. Readers may recall Ms. Cissy Namukasa, an elderly lady, who drowned in an open drainage in Nakawa-Kampala in May 2020. Ms. Namukasa's remains were only discovered last month (February 2021), nearly a year after she drowned.

In the same month as the KCCA warning, the Petroleum Authority of Uganda (PAU) informed the country on March 22, 2021 that the launch of the Tilenga and East African Crude Oil Pipeline (EACOP) projects that had been expected that day had been deferred to April 2021.

PAU said that the launch was extended to enable Uganda and Tanzania to mourn H.E. John Pombe Magufuli, the fallen president of Tanzania. In April 2021 therefore, it is expected that the Ugandan and Tanzanian governments together with Total E&P will launch the

projects and that the Final Investment Decision (FID) for oil production and the EACOP project may be signed.

In the debate surrounding the signing of the EACOP, Tilenga and Kingfisher oil projects' FID, the reported economic benefits of the oil projects such as unlocking million-dollar investments, job creation and others have taken centre stage. But, do the projects pose only economic incentives and no disincentives?

In our **Word from CEO** and 25 civil society organisation (CSO) partners, we show that the negative socio-economic impacts of the EACOP, Tilenga and Kingfisher projects could outweigh the reported oil benefits. These impacts therefore need to be critically assessed and public awareness created before any FID is signed.

The Tilenga, Kingfisher and EACOP oil projects pose climate change, environmental degradation, community land loss, water pollution, air pollution and job loss risks among others.

These risks are having and will have a negative impact on the economy as government spends more to address climate change disasters, tourism income reduces and health budgets increase to address fossil fuel air pollution impacts. Other impacts will or could be increased water purification costs, communities being unable to contribute to the economy as they will have lost their farmlands and others. The huge debts incurred to fund oil infrastructure will also bankrupt the country.

An independent assessment to

determine the negative economic impacts of the EACOP, Tilenga and Kingfisher projects therefore ought to be undertaken so that Ugandans make an informed decision as to whether investing in the above oil projects is the best way forward or oil exploitation is a danger and should be avoided. You will read more about the above in our **Word from CEO and Partners**.

In our **pictorial**, we bring you highlights of our March 2021 activities. For instance, with our partners, we drafted rejoinders in response to the evidence that was submitted by the Tanzanian government over the case that we filed in the East African Court of Justice (EACJ) to stop the EACOP project dangers.

Further, we supported the documentation of lessons from our just energy transition efforts of 2016 to 2020 to enable other CSOs and stakeholders to learn from our successes and challenges.

In addition, we organised meetings with community leaders around Bugoma forest to support the collection of signatures for a petition to the president to stop destruction of Bugoma forest. We also organised meetings with leaders from the EACOP-affected districts to discuss how to protect the EACOP-affected people's land rights.

AFIEGO staff also participated in a webinar for the Green Livelihoods Alliance (GLA) 2.0 partners to discuss integration of gender into the

programme that will run between 2021 and 2025.

In our **lobbying** section, we bring you a letter that 21 CSOs wrote to parliament to halt approval of the \$130 million being sought by government for the EACOP processes.

We also bring you a follow-up letter that the Save Bugoma Forest Campaign (SBFC) wrote to the Ministry of Lands to involve the public in the planned boundary opening of Bugoma forest. We also wrote a letter to the National Forestry Authority (NFA) reminding them of the SBFC's offer to provide pro-bono support for NFA's legal efforts to protect Bugoma forest.

Furthermore, we issued an open letter to the chairperson of the Kikuube District Physical Planning Committee calling on the committee to stop the violation of the district's physical plan by Hoima Sugar Ltd.

In **in the media** section, we bring you some of the articles that were published from our media interviews in addition to articles that staff and our partners wrote. The articles are part of our public education and lobby efforts.

We hope that you will enjoy the newsletter.

Editorial team:
Diana Nabiruma
Balach Bakundane
Patrick Edema

OIL PROJECTS' FID: RISKS TO PEOPLE AND UGANDA'S ECONOMY MUST BE FACTORED INTO DECISION-MAKING

This month was dominated by several issues, key among which was signing of the Final Investment Decision (FID) for the East African Crude Oil Pipeline (EACOP) project.

On March 16 and 17, 2021, Uganda's minister and state minister for finance respectively engaged parliament's Budget and National Economy committees to acquire parliamentary approval to borrow \$130 million.

The money is needed to enable Uganda National Oil Company (UNOC) to fund its equity requirements for the EACOP project and to pay EACOP-related historical costs.

Parliament was informed that the oil companies had made it a requirement for UNOC to provide the above money upfront before the EACOP FID was made.

The EACOP and Tilenga projects were expected to be launched on March 22, 2021.

Scanty information was provided to the public and parliament on the EACOP, Tilenga and Kingfisher oil projects' FID as government has continued to deal secretly when it comes to oil matters.

Government provides too little information to enable effective citizen and even parliamentary participation in oil processes. Even today, no definitive date on signing of the FID has been

provided by government. The public also lacks access to the FID documents.

Parliament refused to approve the money, noting that MPs did not have the EACOP's FID documents. As such, parliament couldn't be sure that Uganda was getting the best deal under the EACOP project.

By the time this newsletter was completed, parliament was scrutinizing the EACOP agreements after which a decision will be made as to whether to permit the Ministry of Finance to borrow money for the EACOP processes.

As parliament scrutinizes the EACOP documents shared by government -these documents haven't been shared with the general public-, we invite parliament to also assess CSOs' concerns in relation to the EACOP, Tilenga and Kingfisher oil projects.

Specifically, the 25 CSOs that have partnered with AFIEGO to pen this article invite parliament to assess the impacts that the climate change, environmental degradation, compulsory land acquisition, air and water pollution in addition to job risks of the EACOP, Tilenga and Kingfisher oil projects will have on the economy.

The assessment should show whether it is in Uganda's best interests to pursue the oil projects and sign the EACOP, Tilenga and Kingfisher FID, which is expected in April 2021.

OIL PROJECTS' RISKS TO PEOPLE, ECONOMY

(a) Climate change and landslide risks: Uganda is grappling with climate change costs and impacts. Extreme weather conditions characterised by heavy rainfall and droughts have been recorded.

These have caused landslides, mudslides, flooding, food insecurity and other disasters. The costs of the above disasters have been high, with the loss of human life being the highest cost paid. Information from Uganda's 2010 National Policy for Disaster Preparedness and Management, the Red Cross and other disaster management organisations shows that between 2010 and February 2021, 379 people were killed in landslides in Bududa, Sironko, Rubanda and Budibungyo districts among others. A 2019 media report that followed community interviews puts the number of lives lost and those that were unaccounted for following landslides between 2010 and 2019 in the Mt. Elgon region at **over 1,000**.

(b) Flood risks: Floods that have been linked to climate change have also led to the loss of lives. Kasese district has suffered severe flooding and in May 2020 alone, 11 people were reported dead following flooding after River Nyamwamba burst its banks. Over 100,000 people were affected by the flooding.

Yet Kasese isn't the only district to be affected. In December 2019, government reported that floods had affected the eastern, central and

northern regions of Uganda among others. The floods destroyed public infrastructure such as the road near the Pakwach bridge, touristic sites such as the viewing rocks at Murchison Falls and others.

Further, **preliminary assessments** by government showed that 165,000 people in Eastern Uganda were either displaced or affected by floods. In the same region, 141,500 hectares of crops were destroyed. Assessments in other regions hadn't been undertaken by the time the aforementioned December 2019 report was produced by government.

Government said that it released UGX 20 billion to handle the disaster, an amount that the country could ill-afford considering the many competing needs.

Climate change costs of the EACOP: AFIEGO and our partners have previously reported that when used, the oil transported by the EACOP project will result in the production of over 34.3 million metric tonnes of carbon per year.

Combined, the EACOP, Tilenga and Kingfisher oil projects will produce more carbon emissions. When this carbon is produced, Uganda's climate change problems such as landslides, flooding, increased disaster spending and others could increase.

Unfortunately, in the ongoing discussion on the reported economic benefits of the EACOP, Tilenga and Kingfisher oil projects, the climate change costs of the projects and how they will impact people and Uganda's economy isn't being discussed. This means that Uganda

could sign the FID for oil projects whose climate change costs could be high. This must be avoided.



Boulders that destroyed schools and other public infrastructure following flooding in Kasese in 2020.

Costs have to be incurred to repair and replace the infrastructure. Burning of Uganda's oil will increase these costs.

Photo credit: The Guardian

(c) Environmental destruction risks:

Furthermore, AFIEGO and our partners have severally written about the environmental resources that stand to be destroyed or degraded because of the EACOP, Tilenga and Kingfisher oil projects. Overall, over 30 ecosensitive resources such as lakes Victoria and Albert, River Nile, Budongo and Taala forests, Nabajuzi and other wetlands, Kabwoya and other wildlife reserves, Murchison Falls National Park and others are at risk because of the oil projects.

The environmental risks posed by the projects will hit Uganda economically as the above resources provide services that support economic activities such as agriculture, fishing, tourism and others.

While the total economic value of all the ecosensitive resources affected by the EACOP, Tilenga and Kingfisher oil projects is unavailable, a 2017 Economic Valuation study of the Murchison

Falls Conservation Area (MFCA) and Budongo forest offers some insight into what stands to be lost.

The assessment by Uganda's National Environment Management Authority (NEMA) and UNDP showed that the value of the above-mentioned two areas was over USD 60 billion (UGX 114 trillion). This value will be degraded due to deforestation and ecosystem degradation caused by the oil projects. Parliament shouldn't allow government to rush to borrow funds and make the oil projects' FID without knowing the full environmental economic costs of the EACOP, Tilenga and Kingfisher projects.

Table 1: Value of Ecosystem Services and products in MFCBFC

Ecosystem products/services	Value of the service/product (Ushs)
Value of timber stock	146 billion
Non-timber products (mainly wood)	4.81 billion per yr
Non-wood Forest products	5.425 billion per yr.
Medicinal and pharmaceutical value	2.21 billion per yr
Soil erosion control	132.1 billion per year
Tourism value	110.4 billion in 2008
Carbon sequestration and storage value	3.75 billion per yr
Option, bequest and existence value	30.4 trillion
Relocation and rehabilitation value	114.438 trillion
Watershed protection and catchment services	26.5 billions
Research and education	47 million
Costs to the community	2.5 billion per yr
Opportunity costs for MFCA (livestock husbandry)	4.8 billion per yr
Opportunity costs for BCFR (sugarcane option)	20.4 billion per yr
Income of the MFCA	2.2 billion (2008)
Oil reserve	Value not yet established

Economic services and values provided by MFCA and Budongo forest

(d) Water and air pollution threats: On March 23, 2021, the media published sobering **research** findings. The 2018 findings showed that air pollution arising from the burning of fossil fuels such as petrol, diesel and coal caused an estimated 30% deaths in East Asia and 16% in Europe as well as some parts of the U.S. In South America, 7.8% deaths were attributed to air pollution, 3.7% in Africa and 3.2% in Australia as well as Oceania.

The above deaths were more than those caused by malaria and smoking put together. Fossil fuel air pollution triggers or worsens respiratory and heart diseases, resulting in death in some people.

Forests, which purify air, are important for countering this fossil fuel pollution. So does a reduction in the burning of fossil fuels.

The aforementioned research, which shows that between over 8 to 10.2 million premature deaths resulted from fossil fuel air pollution, notes that economic and health costs of \$2.9 trillion can be avoided if fossil fuel pollution is dealt with.

With burning of the oil produced under the Tilenga and Kingfisher oil projects, these costs will not be avoided. They will have to be met, including in Uganda.

Unfortunately, the economic costs of the fossil fuel air pollution by the Tilenga, Kingfisher and EACOP oil projects is unknown.

The economic costs of polluting Lake Victoria, Lake Albert, River Nile and other water sources also remains unknown yet Uganda is seeking to make the oil projects' and EACOP FID based on the economic promises of oil. This trap must be avoided.

(e) Jobs risks: Furthermore, the number of jobs that are at risk due to the EACOP, Tilenga and Kingfisher oil projects hasn't been publicly shared. Due to the land acquisition and potential climate change impacts of the projects however, it can be surmised that agricultural jobs stand to be lost. Over 70% of the working population in Uganda is engaged in agriculture and this population is at risk. Further, tourism stands to be affected as biodiversity in forests and

national parks will be negatively impacted by the oil projects. Over 600,000 people work in the tourism and travel industry and their jobs are at risk. Furthermore, the livelihoods of the 2.6 million people majority of whom are youth and women who work in the fisheries industry in Uganda stand to be affected by the oil projects due to oil pollution and other risks.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Information on oil developments in Uganda remains a secret affair with government guarding critical information. Further, for over 15 years, government and oil companies have fed Ugandans on speculations about oil being a blessing yet all signs show that the way things stand today, oil will destroy our country. This should be avoided by doing the following:

- i. Government should stay signing of the EACOP, Tilenga and Kingfisher FID until independent analyses of the full economic costs that will arise from the climate change, environmental, health, social and job losses risks of the projects have been assessed, publicly disclosed and discussed.
- ii. Further, parliament, led by the Speaker and with the support of the committees on the National Economy and Natural Resources, should compel government to undertake the above analyses.
- iii. Parliament should not pass any budget requests for the EACOP and other projects until the above analyses have been undertaken to show the economic viability of the EACOP project in light of the above costs.
- iv. Finally, citizens should compel their MPs and government to act on the above recommendations.

By CEO and 25 CSO Partners

Pictorial of our activities

March 5, 2021

AFIEGO organised an engagement with youth clean energy champions to highlight just energy transition (JET) efforts that are needed to enable youth access to clean energy.

The youth also received photo story calendars to enable them understand the JET needs. AFIEGO continues to work with youth leaders to promote clean energy access in Uganda.



March 17-19, 2021

AFIEGO supported the documentation of lessons gained by women clean energy champions and CSOs in Kasese district. With AFIEGO's support, the women champions and CSOs promoted clean energy access and use between 2016 and 2020.

The lessons, which were documented through film, will support other women and youth to learn how they can promote clean energy.



March 26, 2021

AFIEGO and our partners under the Save Bugoma Forest Campaign (SBFC) organised meetings with leaders from communities surrounding Bugoma forest in Kikuube district.

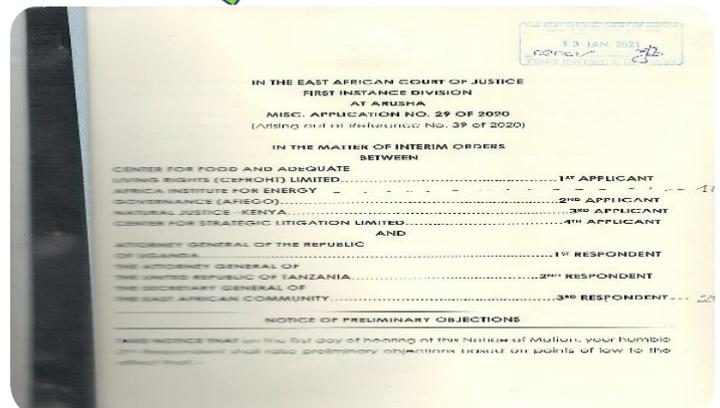
The meetings facilitated planning for the collection of community signatures for a petition to the president of Uganda to save Bugoma forest from sugarcane and oil threats.



March 5, 2021

AFIEGO and our partners who filed a court case in the EACJ to stop the EACOP dangers received a response from the Tanzanian government. AFIEGO worked with our partners to draft a rejoinder to the response. The rejoinder is going to be filed.

Expert evidence from ELAW-US, Oil Change International (OCI) and others on the EACOP dangers has also been collected.



March 25, 2021

AFIEGO organised meetings with community leaders from the EACOP-affected Kikuube district. AFIEGO and the leaders planned for community engagements to support EACOP-affected communities in Hoima, Kikuube and Kakumiro districts to defend their land and environment rights.



March 30, 2021

AFIEGO joined our partners under the GLA 2.0 programme for a webinar to support the integration of gender in the 2021-2025 GLA 2.0 programme.

AFIEGO staff shared lessons on mainstreaming gender into partners' work. AFIEGO shared the lessons gained during the GLA 1 programme of 2015-2020.

AFIEGO staff also learnt from the other partners.

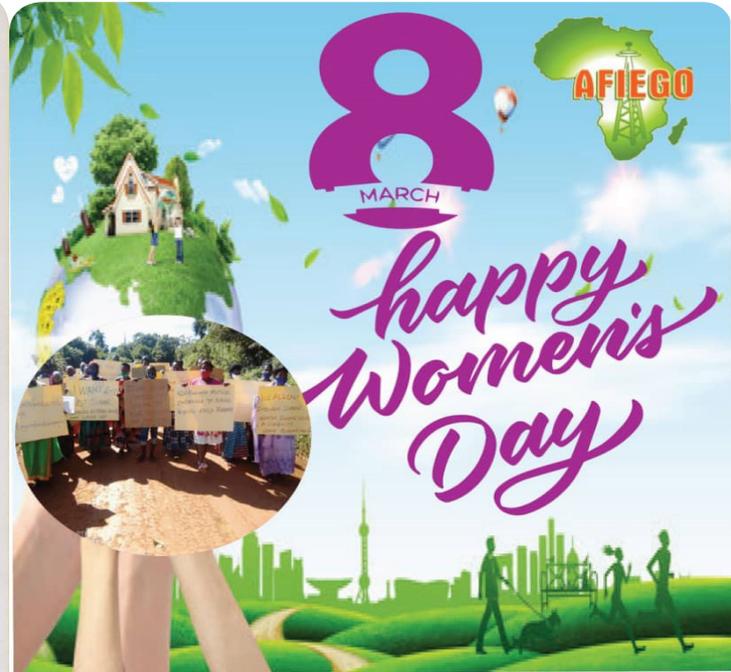
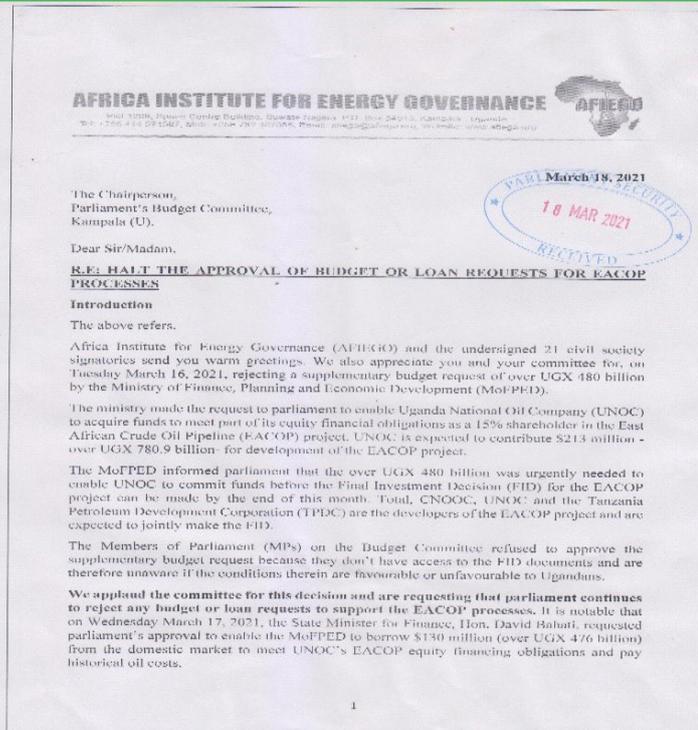
Panel discussion



Lobbying

This month, AFIEGO and 20 other CSOs wrote to parliament to halt approval of the \$130 million being sought by government for the EACOP processes. AFIEGO and our partners also wrote a follow-up letter to the Ministry of Lands to involve the public in the planned boundary opening of Bugoma forest. We also wrote a letter to NFA reminding them of our and our partners' offer of pro-bono support to NFA's legal efforts to protect Bugoma forest.

Furthermore, we issued an open letter to the chairperson of the Kikuube District Physical Planning Committee. We called on the committee to stop the violation of the district's physical plan by Hoima Sugar Ltd.



AFIEGO dedicates Women's Day 2021 to all those fighting to end oil-induced injustice against women in Uganda



26th March 2021

The Prime Minister
Bunyoro Kitara Kingdom
Hoima Oil City
P.O BOX 8
Hoima -Uganda



Dear Owek,

RE: REQUEST FOR A MEETING OVER THREATS TO BUGOMA FOREST

The above refers

The undersigned Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) working under the Save Bugoma Forest Campaign (SBFC)-an initiative to save Bugoma forest from the ongoing land grabbing and other threats take this opportunity to thank you for the continued cultural support to Kings Subjects in Bunyoro Kitara Kingdom and the entire country.

The main objective of the SBFC is to mobilize Ugandans and all people who love Uganda and its nature to work together and save Bugoma forest from all threats and risks by Hoima Sugar Ltd and other land grabbers

Since 2016, we have been engaging key stakeholders to ensure the forest is protected from degradation. These stakeholders include NFA, NEMA, Bunyoro Kitara Kingdom, Ministry of lands Housing and Urban Development, Ministry of Water and Environment, EU Ambassadors, Parliamentary Committee on Natural Resources, Local government political and technical officers, communities surrounding Bugoma Forest and many more.

This letter therefore is to request you and the ministers for a meeting with representatives of the SBFC on 8th April 2021 from 9:00am -12pm at your office; we shall adhere to all COVID 19 SOP's. The meeting will enable us discuss ways through which your office can support efforts to save Bugoma Forest from degradation.



March 24, 2021

The Chairperson (Chief Administrative Officer-CAO)
Kikuube District Physical Planning, Committee,
Uganda.

Dear Sir/Madam,

R.E: OPEN LETTER ON VIOLATION OF KIKUUBE DISTRICT'S PHYSICAL PLAN OF 2020-2040 BY HOIMA SUGAR LTD

Greetings from the Save Bugoma Forest Campaign (SBFC), a coalition of Ugandan civil society organisations (CSOs) and tour operators working with communities and stakeholders in Kikuube district, Bunyoro region and across the country to save Bugoma forest from destruction for sustainable development.

The SBFC appreciates your efforts and leadership that enabled the Kikuube District Physical Planning Committee to put in place the *Kikuube District Physical Development Plan 2020-2040*. The plan is aligned with the 2010 Physical Planning Act (as amended in 2020) and provides for various land uses in the district. Land uses such as forestry, protected areas, water, wetlands, landfills, commercial areas, agricultural areas, buffer areas, institutional, industrial, mixed land use and residential settlements among others are provided for and the locations are well mapped.

Unfortunately, non-compliance with the plan continues to undermine your efforts in particular and national development at large.

Indeed, despite the existence of the district's physical plan, Hoima Sugar Limited (HSL) is currently changing the land use of the areas demarcated for forestry by the district.

The actions of HSL under the Kyngswali Mixed Land Use project taking place in an area planned for forestry contravenes various provisions of the 2010 Physical Planning Act (as amended in 2020) including sections 2A, 10, 18, 25, 26, 31, 32, 33, 46 and others. These provisions generally and specifically require every person or company to comply with district plans. They also require among others, any private land owner intending to commence a project in any district to submit his or her plan for development to the district physical planning committee for approval.

Indeed, section 33 of the Act provides that any person who proceeds with any development without permission contravenes the provisions of the Act and shall be liable to imprisonment.

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In the media

This month, 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.

Total not upfront about Tilenga, oil pipeline projects

March 24, 2021 | Written by Diana Nabiruma @ John Kakuho Lufukamba



Oil pipeline project activities.

On March 8, 2021, Total, the global oil giant, published a statement titled, 'Tilenga and EACOP: Acting transparently'.

The company outlined ways in which it is addressing the environmental and social concerns of the twin projects, which are located in some of Uganda's and indeed the region's most eco-sensitive areas.

These include Murchison Falls national park (MUNP), the Murchison-Falls Albert Delta wetland system - a Ramsar site - and the Lake Victoria basin among others.

Total's statement was published after 263 environmental and human rights civil society organisations (CSOs) from Uganda and all over the world wrote to the banks that are arranging financing for the East African Crude Oil Pipeline (EACOP) project and those that have recently financed the EACOP project developers, specifically Total and CNODD.

Compensate Kibiro oil spill victims

Government through Ministry of Energy and Mineral Development on November 11, 2019 contracted M/s Royal Techno Industries Limited to drill and test 16 temperature gradient wells in Kibiro and Panyimur areas.

On March 22, 2020 as the company's operations were underway in Hoima district at Kibiro landing site, an explosion at the well led to an oil spillage. This led to socio-economic and environmental impacts. The oil spill was estimated to be less than 300 meters between Lake Albert shores and the historical and cultural Kibiro hot springs. The drilling of the Kibiro wells went on without an environmental and social impact assessment study, a violation of the National Environment Act of 2019.

The Kibiro oil spill comprised a mixture of clay, water, crude oil and smelling gas, which contaminated waters of Lake Albert, fishing nets, the sand soil and one household's property and land.

Government officials from NEMA, the Petroleum Authority of Uganda and Hoima district local government visited the site and evaluated the damage on soil and water. However, one household of Julius Kiiza Rubanjwa, which was affected, has never been compensated up to date. This has put at risk the lives of the family and the neighbors.

In a press release issued on April 15, 2020, the ministry of Energy and Mineral Development directed the contractor to halt her activities, clean up and establish remedial mitigation efforts to restore the environment, among others. The ministry of Energy did not commit itself to compensating the affected household. One year down the road, nothing yet has been done.

Sandra Atusinguzza

atusinguzas@gmail.com

IMPLEMENT PHYSICAL PLANS TO SAVE WETLANDS

EDITOR: Last week, the media reported about the increasing destruction of the wetlands in Wakiso district by residents, especially rich people who are behind big construction projects.

Indeed, many wetlands in Kampala metropolitan area are now occupied by factories or buildings.

The destruction of wetlands happens because the Government has failed to implement the district and city physical plans. Implementing the physical plans can help to control development functions and land use in an environmentally friendly manner.

The Government recently created 15 new cities including Mbale, Hoima, Arua, Jinja, Fort Portal and Masaka. The creation of these cities indirectly means that the destruction of the wetlands is likely to increase.

Most of the wetlands in the country have been degraded due to more people looking for agricultural land, industrial

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to contribute to flooding, outbreak of diseases, drought, human-animal conflict and climate change, among others.

Ugandans should know that these wetlands that are massively destroying are of great value to our environment and livelihood.

For instance, they provide food and habitat for fish and wildlife, including threatened and endangered species and help in water quality improvement, flood storage as well as shoreline erosion control. Economically, they are used for recreation, education and research.

Therefore, I urge the National Environmental Management Authority, lands ministry and district leaders to implement the district and city physical plans to save our sensitive ecosystems that are under threat from the onslaught of rich people.

Paul Kato, research associate
Africa Institute for Energy Governance

development and human settlement. Therefore, Ugandans should know that wetlands will be massively depleted if concerted effort to mitigate their degradation is not accelerated.

According to the March 12, 2020 report by the Ministry of Water and Environment, Uganda will be left with only 1.6% of the wetlands by 2040 if the destruction trend is not reversed by the deliberate and dedicated restoration programmes countrywide.

The wetlands in Uganda are under a big threat because of the massive development of towns, industries and agricultural sector. This is likely

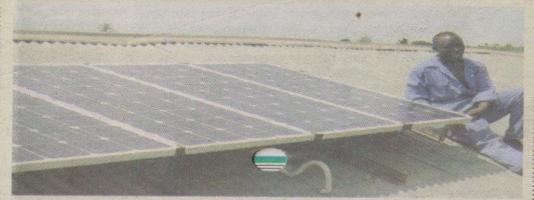
Free connection alone won't increase access to electricity

I recently read a story in the media to the effect that the government is planning to resume the electricity connection policy (free connection policy) to connect Ugandans to the national grid. The story said the free connection policy aims at addressing the challenges of low connection rates that previous policies did not address.

The policy was unveiled in 2016 with the aim of increasing the number of connections made annually from the average 70,000 before the policy to 300,000 annually at full implementation. However, the initiative was suspended last year.

The policy only managed to attain 7 per cent rural electrification yet 80 per cent of the Ugandan population lives in rural areas. The failure had left the majority of rural areas without power.

The government intends to increase demand for power through increasing the number of industries in industrial parks in addition to expanding the domestic consumer base through implementing the 'Free Elec-



tricity Connections Policy. However, last year, Umeme informed electricity sector players that while the company experienced an average growth rate of 16 per cent in its domestic customer base between 2012 and 2018, consumption only grew by a half, at 8 per cent.

In addition, the manufacturing sector continues to complain about high power tariffs. As you are aware, a poor and highly indebted country that is struggling with Covid-19 impact, citizens cannot afford high power tariffs.

While I commend government's efforts to increase access to clean energy, the govern-

ment must increase investment in off-grid solar energy to meet the energy needs of all Ugandans. Access to clean and affordable energy is crucial in the eradication of poverty through advancements in health, education, water supply and industrialization, to combating climate change.

Initiatives such as the sustainable energy for all, the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), Goal 7 and others, highlight the need to have equal access to clean, affordable and reliable energy.

Although government is making heavy investments in hydro-power dams and extend-

Amend Electricity Act to curb power theft

The electricity distribution company Umeme, and Uganda Police Force launched a joint operation against illegal power connections and related activities across the country starting with Kampala. The relaunch of the operation dubbed 'Kombaa' follows an increase in the level of power losses over the last one year, especially during the lock down, when enforcement was suspended.

According to Umeme, power losses through theft and illegal connections have risen to more than 17 per cent of the total power supplied, up from the 13 per cent recorded a year ago. Kombaa is Swahili word for 'redeem',

and in Umeme's case, the operation is aimed at redeeming the network from illegal users and operators, and will involve identifying illegal connections, disconnecting them, arresting and prosecuting the culprits.

The persistence of challenges relating to electricity distribution continues to cause losses in billions of shillings both for the government and the electricity distribution company. Such losses are incurred through un-billed consumption, illegal connection and vandalism. It is noted that any percent-



age point lost, the monetary value lost is Shs10 billion, much of which is in Kampala alone.

Although the Judiciary created Utilities, Standards and Wildlife court to handle some of the crimes affecting the electricity sector, the court is yet to create sufficient impact to address the challenges in the sector.

Among the crimes the court is supposed to handle are power theft, illegal electricity connection, and vandalism of electricity equipment such as wires and transformers. The electric-

ity sector faces other challenges such as faulty meters, power cutoffs in hospitals, constant electrocutions of consumers, oil poles, wires and transformers, among others.

The Ministry of Energy should complete and present the amendments of the Electricity Act 1999 to Parliament for the betterment of the sector. The amended should include penalty for any distribution company that will cut, standard of equipment that will be used in installation of electric pow-

er, should also have tougher penalties that will deter the perpetrators of power theft, and vandalism from the rampant vice, among others.

Finally the amended Electricity Act should include a provision that makes it an offence for anyone to supply consumers with faulty equipment such as yaka meters. Besides, this section should also include a penalty in case of non-compliance.

Patrick Edema,
patrick60@gmail.com



Upcoming events

April 5-9, 2021; Kikuube: Community sensitisation meetings to save Bugoma forest from oil and sugarcane threats

April 6-9; 2021; Hoima and Kikkube: Meetings with district, cultural and religious leaders to support efforts to save Bugoma forest

April 6-9 2021; Greater Masaka: Community sensitisation meetings on the EACOP project

April 6-9, 2021; Greater Masaka: Meetings with district leaders to discuss the EACOP project

April 12, 2021; Greater Masaka and Kampala: Launch of briefing paper on prospects and risks of the EACOP project

April 13, 2021; Kampala: Meeting with MPs to discuss EACOP project risks

April 12-16; 2021; Hoima, Kikuube and Kakumiro: Community sensitisation meetings on the EACOP project

April 19-23, 2021; DRC: Community sensitisation engagements on impacts of oil activities on Lake Albert

April 5-30; 2021; Greater Masaka, Bunyoro and Kanungu: Community film screenings on oil impacts

About Africa Institute for Energy Governance (AFIEGO)

Africa Institute for Energy Governance (AFIEGO) is a public policy research and advocacy organisation dedicated to influencing energy policies to benefit the poor and vulnerable. Based in Kampala, Uganda, the organisation 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 clean energy policies that benefit poor and vulnerable communities