

The **ENERGIZER**

AFIEGO's Monthly Newsletter



February 2020; Issue 2



Some oil-affected people in Hoima during a demonstration event to protect their land rights as they are provided for under Article 26 of the 1995 Uganda Constitution. Government wants to use the 2018 Land Acquisition Bill to amend Article 26 of the Constitution to deny citizens their land rights.

In this newsletter:

- Government, stop trying to amend Article 26 of the Constitution through the 2018 Land Acquisition Bill
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Editorial

This month (February), our organisation has been undertaking public education efforts in the form of community meetings, radio talkshows, stakeholder film screenings, dissemination of photo story calendars and others.

The purpose of our activities has been to strengthen stakeholders' knowledge on oil impacts and environment and land laws to promote environmental conservation, communities' livelihoods and communities' rights including land rights.

During our engagements, we came across community members, women and youth who told us heart-rending stories about how land acquisitions for oil projects such as the oil refinery, Tilenga, Kingfisher and East African Crude Oil Pipeline (EACOP) have affected their access to land, food security, family incomes, ability to pay their children's school fees and others.

The communities have had hope because with the support of organisations such as AFIEGO, they would use Article 26 of the 1995 Uganda Constitution to protect their land rights.

Article 26 of the Constitution confers on every citizen a right to own land.

The same article provides that government has a right to compulsorily acquire citizens' land for public use among others.

However, this article places a caveat on the powers it confers on government.

The article requires government to pay prompt, fair and adequate compensation to land owners where government uses compulsory powers to acquire any land.

This remains one of the most important provisions in the 1995 Constitution.

Unfortunately, poor implementation and

compliance to the law by government and developers continues to curtail citizens' ability to protect their land rights.

Enter the 2018 Land Acquisition Bill which will make the protection of citizens' land rights even harder.

The 2018 Land Acquisition Bill is part of the efforts by the Ugandan government to address the weaknesses of the 1965 compulsory Land Acquisition Act.

The bill is also aimed at strengthening compliance with the Constitution as a means of stopping land injustices in the country.

It should be noted that the 1965 land law does not provide for fair, adequate and prompt compensation before any compulsory land acquisition and this is contrary to the Constitution.

These and other contradictions have been blamed for the poor implementation and compliance with Article 26 of the Constitution. For example, in 2016, Section 7 of the 1965 Land Acquisition Act was declared unconstitutional by the Constitutional and Supreme courts to the extent that it allowed government to acquire citizens' land and other property before compensation.

Weak implementation and compliance with laws coupled with contradictions in the legal framework governing the land sector have caused thousands of communities across the country to suffer grave injustices as government and companies acquire land for projects.

To mention but a few, the affected communities that have suffered include:

- Over 1,200 people displaced for the Bujagali dam project;
- The 7,118 people displaced for the proposed oil refinery project in Hoima;

- Over 4,000 people displaced by the power transmission projects taking power to Kenya and Rwanda;
- The 5,000 people that are to be displaced in ten districts across Uganda for the EACOP project;
- The people affected by the oil roads projects that are ongoing in the oil region and;
- The people affected by the Tilenga and Kingfisher oil projects in Buliisa, Kikuube, Hoima and other districts.

The 2018 Land Acquisition Bill could be used as an opportunity by government and Ugandan citizens to strengthen land governance in the country to protect land owners, especially poor communities, women, children and others, during compulsory land acquisitions.

Unfortunately, the current Land Acquisition Bill still contains several weaknesses that require to be addressed before the bill is presented by the Ministry of Lands to parliament for debate and enactment.

Among others, the bill gives the minister and Chief Government Valuer (CGV) too much power in land acquisitions, introduces cut-off dates that are not time-bound and fails to define what fair, adequate and prompt compensation is.

The bill also does not provide for strengthening of district land boards in respect to funding and many other weaknesses.

In our **Word from AFIEGO & Partners**, we discuss the gaps in the bill and make recommendations to help government and parliament to make a good law that will address the land injustices suffered by citizens whose land is compulsorily acquired in the country.

In **our pictorial** section, we share a summary of some of the activities we implemented this month including the hearing of the Tilenga case of 2019, the hearing of the oil refinery-affected people's case of 2014, community sensitisation activities, film screenings for women and youth from oil-affected districts and others aimed at empowering citizens to promote and defend human and environmental rights against oil and other threats and risks.

In the **lobbying** section, we bring you press statements and a communique that we issued as part of our efforts to protect communities' land rights and promote environmental conservation amidst hydropower dams and oil threats.

Finally, in **in the media** section, we bring you some of the over 13 newspaper articles that were written by our staff and partners and were published in the leading newspapers in the country.

Our staff were also interviewed by national newspapers such as the *Daily Monitor* and *New Vision* as part of our efforts to promote environmental conservation through promotion of clean energy.

We hope you enjoy the newsletter.

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Diana Nabiruma

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Word from AFIEGO & Partners

Government, stop trying to amend Article 26 of the Constitution through the 2018 Land Acquisition Bill

This month, information that government was paying Shs. 10 million per day for power that is not evacuated from the 42-mw Achwa II hydropower dam was released; the dam was commissioned in 2019. The reason for paying for unconsumed power? Due to poor planning, desiring to commit injustices by paying the project-affected persons (PAPs) inadequate compensation and others, government failed to acquire land to construct evacuation lines to evacuate power from the dam.

As such, poor Ugandans are forking out millions per day to pay for a dam that they are not using. Yet this is not the first project for which government has tried to acquire land and failed. Like the 76 Achwa II dam transmission line-affected households that took government to court over government's desire to pay them inadequate compensation and court granted an injunction stopping the dam transmission line project, several Ugandans have taken government to court or have rejected low compensation resulting in delayed implementation of projects by government.

The PAPs are right to protect their land rights in court not least because land is the biggest factor of production on which over 68% of Ugandans rely to make a living. However, government feels that citizens standing up to protect their rights is not good.

What has government done? Following failure to amend Article 26 of the 1995 Uganda Constitution after public pressure between 2016 and 2018, cabinet dropped proposals to amend the article in 2018. Consequently, government developed the 2018 Land Acquisition Bill.

The bill seeks to amend the 1965 Land Acquisition Act which was enacted before the 1995 Constitution and contains provisions that contradict the Constitution especially on assessment and payment of compensation.

In addition, one of the major weaknesses in the existing legal framework on land has been

lack of clear provisions defining what prompt, fair and adequate compensation is as is provided for under Article 26 of the 1995 Constitution. This has bred conflicts between government and PAPs.

In view of the existing weaknesses in land acquisition laws, the 2018 Land Acquisition Bill was developed under the stewardship of the Ministry of Lands.

The bill is a major milestone in the struggle to address land injustices especially the challenges faced by poor communities, women and other vulnerable groups during compulsory land acquisitions. While the bill contains huge gaps, it has some good provisions including:

- Providing for the need to comply with articles 26 and 137 of the Constitution;
- Requiring government to pay cash compensation within six months and relocating and resettling communities within 12 months from the date of compensation awards;
- Providing that any assessment report shall remain valid for only 12 months from the date of giving a compensation award and;
- Providing for payment of disturbance allowance, payment of interest on delayed cash compensation as well as establishment of a Land Acquisition Tribunal among others.

Despite the few good provisions, the bill contains grave gaps that need to be addressed by government and parliament. The major gaps in the bill are listed beginning from page 5 below.



Women who were affected by the oil refinery project some of whom were not provided with houses by government despite commitments to. The women were constructing houses for themselves in January 2017.

The Land Acquisition Bill must define what compensation entails to prevent government refusal to fully compensate PAPs including with houses.

Gaps in the 2018 Land Acquisition Bill

i). The purpose of the bill reflects sinister motives on the part of government. Among other things, clause 2 of the bill provides that the bill intends to enable expeditious compulsory land acquisitions by government.

This selfish objective does not address the all-too common injustices of land grabbing and does not seek to protect land owners from illegal displacements. A bill whose main objective is for the benefit of government while ignoring communities' needs is not good.

ii). Shallow interpretation of compensation:

Moreover, Clause 3 of the bill fails to define the principle and spirit of purpose of Article 26 of the Constitution as it provides that compensation means cash compensation, resettlement and relocation. This interpretation is not helpful because the words cash compensation, resettlement and relocation are too wide and government and companies will abuse and misuse them.

Failure to spell out what cash compensation, relocation and resettlement are will mean that the nature of resettlement packages awarded to the PAPs by government will be left to the whim of government, which government has demonstrated an insatiable desire to under-compensate PAPs, refuse to fully resettle them through building them houses, restore their livelihoods and others.

iii). Failure to define fair and adequate compensation: Further, clause 3 on interpretation fails to define what fair and adequate compensation is.

Lack of these definitions to date has seen scores of Ugandans from Kampala to Hoima to Buliisa to Kikuube and other districts being paid unfair and inadequate compensation for roads, electricity, oil and other projects as government is left to decide what prompt, fair and adequate compensation is.

Government, a buyer that is bent on paying poor Ugandans low compensation for its benefit,

is left to decide what fair and adequate is. This will not promote payment of fair and adequate compensation.

iv). Moreover, the same clause 3 vests powers of defining fairness and adequacy of compensation in the hands of the Chief Government Valuer (CGV). This is a big weakness of the bill. It appears that the drafters of the bill are oblivious of the fact that it is not tenable to require the CGV to value property. A single office cannot be given powers to make huge decisions on the adequacy of compensation without adequate checks by citizens.

The drafters of the bill also fail to recognise that under section 60 of the 1998 Land Act, district land boards (DLBs) are given independence on issues of formulating compensation rates for crops and buildings of a none-permanent nature. The DLBs are mandated to consult communities while fulfilling the above duty.

v). It is wrong for the bill to give the minister powers to acquire private land before compensation.

Clause 8 (4) of the bill contravenes Article 26 of the Constitution as it attempts to allow government to take away citizens' land ownership status before payment of fair, adequate and prompt compensation.

This clause clearly shows that government wants to use the Land Acquisition law to indirectly amend Article 26 of the Constitution to the extent that it turns land owners into compensation claimants.

Retaining the above clause in the current form will encourage fraud on the part of government and developers. The bill should be rejected in its current form.

(4) Upon the declaration by the Minister under this section, the estate and interest of every person having an interest in the land immediately before the declaration,

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shall be deemed to have been converted into a claim for compensation under this Act.

Clause 8(4) which will indirectly amend Article 26 if the Bill is passed in its current form

vi). The bill also establishes a cut-off date before payment of compensation. Clause 8(5) of the bill, which says that all developments on land will be

frozen after the Minister of Lands has declared that land is going to be acquired, is attempting to legalise the concept of a cut-off date that has been responsible for the suffering of Ugandans. While it is appreciated that a cut-off date may be necessary for planning, it must be given a timeframe within which it should expire. Failure to do so will see communities suffer.

vii). Moreover, clause 8(6) of the bill violates the Constitution as it attempts to restrict citizens' rights under Article 26 through restricting land owners from using their land before payment of fair compensation. The bill should not do this.

viii). Furthermore, clause 15 fails to provide a timeframe within which the minister should make regulations for the resettlement and rehabilitation of PAPs. In the end, the bill may end up like the 1965 law where the minister has since 1965 failed to put in place regulations for assessment and payment of compensation as required by Section 20 of the 1965 Land Acquisition Act.

ix). More so, Clause 16 of the bill fails to provide for a mandatory obligation on government to provide restoration programmes for PAPs in conformity with international standards and best practices. The clause provides that government may implement livelihood restoration programmes. This is a big gap as more often than not, communities have suffered untold suffering due to lack of restoration of their livelihoods.

x). It is great that under clauses 2 and 3, the bill establishes a Land Acquisition Tribunal with five members including a chairperson and vice chairperson with qualifications of a judge. However, the bill is silent as to whether it will be only one national tribunal based at the centre or each district shall have a tribunal. This gap should be addressed to ensure that the tribunal is accessible to communities and reliable.

xi). Clause 35 of the bill among others provides that the High Court shall be the last court of appeal and will hear cases in a maximum of 45 days. However, the bill attempts to instruct the

court to use surveyors and valuers. This is wrong and a danger to the independence of the courts.

xii). It is also unfortunate that the bill in its current state does not provide for the procedure for acquisition of protected areas. To date, critical protected areas such as central forest reserves, national parks and game reserves, wetlands, lakes, rivers, mountains and others are being destroyed as government and companies implement projects such as oil activities, sugarcane farming, growing of pine trees and others.

While Article 237(2)(b) of the 1995 Constitution provides that government owns protected areas in trust for the citizens, government has continued to abuse the said trust as they give away forests, parks and others for oil activities and other projects without consulting the citizens who are the owners of nature.

To this extent, any bill on land acquisition that does not seek to protect critical protected areas is not useful and should be rejected.

xiii). Finally, the Bill fails to provide for the conduct and implementation of Resettlement Action Plan (RAPs), which are required under international best practices to guide compensation processes. The provision on RAPs should seek to provide for a framework to protect both the citizens and their critical biodiversity such as forests, parks, rivers, lakes, wetlands and others.



EACOP-affected communities line up to submit comments to NEMA on the EACOP ESIA in October 2019.

The communities complained and said that placement of a cut-off date on their property by government had had many socio-economic impacts on them.

The Land Acquisition Bill must ensure that cut-off dates are time-bound to avoid the impacts faced by PAPs.

Recommendations

Based on the above identified gaps, we make the following recommendations for action:

a). The Land Acquisition Bill should be revised to among other things provide that protected areas such as forest reserves, parks and game reserves, wetlands, lakes, rivers and others are owned by the citizens and government is a mere trustee in line with Article 237 of the Constitution.

As such, citizens' right and the mandate to protect the above resources from destructive activities such as oil and others must be respected at all times through government consulting citizens before giving away the resources for projects.

b). The purpose of the bill should be expanded to include protection of the land rights of poor and vulnerable communities such as women, youth, children affected people and others.

c). Further, the bill should define the words cash compensation, resettlement and relocation. Compensation, be it cash or relocation, must take into account monetary and social losses such as loss of scared natural sites and others.

d). In addition, the bill should provide full definitions of the meaning of fair and adequate compensation. Failure to address this definition gap will continue to undermine the enjoyment of Article 26 of the Constitution, especially by the poor, youth, children and women. In addition, any compensation must be based on full consultation with the community.

e). Further, no person with an interest on land should ever be turned into a claimant for compensation as is sought

under Clause 8 (4) of the bill. At all times, government should not interfere with citizens' land ownership until after payment of fair and adequate compensation.

f). The minister should, in one year after enactment of the bill into law, put in place and operationalize all regulations required under the bill including those on assessment and payment of compensation.

g). Determination of fair and adequate compensation should be based on consent between the land owner and government. In case of disagreements, government should file a case with the lead agency and thereafter the tribunal after which a case should be filed with the High Court. At all times, government should bear the full costs of prosecuting any case brought under the said law.

h). The Land Acquisition Tribunal should be under obligation to hear cases from the districts. The number of members should be increased to seven to include none fulltime representatives including a senior member representing Uganda Law Society and another representing the Inter-religious Council of Uganda.

i). The bill should avoid stopping land owners from using their land until payment of fair and adequate compensation. The cut-off date is not necessary considering that the bill requires the tribunal to complete every complaint within 30 days and the High Court to determine causes within 45 days.

j). Provision of livelihood restoration and RAP development should be strictly provided for in the bill.

By AFIEGO and Partners

Pictorial of our activities

AFIEGO SUPPORTS TILENGA EIA CASE HEARING, JUDGE EXPRESSES WILLINGNESS TO EXPEDITE THE CASE



On February 3, 2020, court heard the case that youth and civil society organisations (CSOs) filed for cancellation of the Tilenga Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) certificate of approval. The case hearing took place at the Kampala High Court.

The youth and CSOs argue that procedural irregularities and violation of laws occurred during the public review process on the Tilenga Environmental and Social and Impact Assessment (ESIA) report. This necessitates cancellation of the Tilenga EIA certificate as it was issued after a flawed process that will not promote environmental conservation and community livelihoods.

In line with the directive made by the Chief Justice and in line with the law on judicial review matters, the presiding judge expressed desire to expeditiously conclude the case. AFIEGO, our partner CSOs and the youth are set to engage the judiciary for a faster case hearing process.

In the photos are AFIEGO staff and lawyers after the case hearing and during media interviews.



REFINERY-AFFECTED PEOPLE DECRY IMPACTS CAUSED BY POOR RAP IMPLEMENTATION DURING COURT CASE HEARING



On February 21, 2020, AFIEGO facilitated the oil refinery-affected people during their court case hearing. The hearing took place at the High Court in Kampala.

During and after the hearing, Mr .Christopher Opio, an oil refinery-affected person, submitted evidence that showed that the oil refinery-affected people are faced with discrimination, isolation and cannot access credit services through strong social relations with their neighbours. This has hampered the people's economic development.

The above failures happened as a result of government failure to implement commitments in the 2012 RAP report for the oil refinery project. It is hoped that the evidence submitted by the people will result in the restoration of some of the affected people's rights.

Following submission of the above evidence, the presiding judge adjourned the case to May 25, 2020. She hopes to conclude hearing of the case in June 2020.

In the photos are the refinery-affected people (top) after the case hearing and Mr. Opio in addition to Ms. Doreen Namara, AFIEGO's, Legal Assistant, while being interviewed by a journalist (bottom).



AFIEGO PARTNERS WITH YOUTH LEADERS TO STRENGTHEN EACOP-AFFECTED AND OTHER YOUTH'S KNOWLEDGE ON OIL IMPACTS



On February 28, 2020, AFIEGO partnered with Bunyoro Kitara Students' Association (KISA), Buganda Nkobazambogo and Kyambogo University Environmental Students' Association (KUEMA) to organise a film screening.

The screening brought together over 30 youth and youth leaders from the EACOP-affected and other oil-affected districts.

The film screening increased the youth's awareness of oil impacts as seen in Uganda and Ecuador. The youth pledged to work with AFIEGO to sensitise oil-affected communities on oil impacts.

In the photos are AFIEGO staff, the youth and youth leaders during a discussion of the films and after the film screening.



AFIEGO DISSEMINATES PHOTO STORY CALENDARS TO EMPOWER WOMEN AND YOUTH ON OIL IMPACTS



In addition to the above film screening, AFIEGO partnered with KISA, Buganda Nkobazambogo and KUEMA to disseminate photo story calendars to increase youth's awareness on oil impacts.

The dissemination took place on February 28, 2020 and the calendars were disseminated to youth and youth leaders from the EACOP-affected and other oil-affected districts.

AFIEGO also disseminated photo story calendars to women clean energy champions and resource centres in Kasese district.

In the photos are the youth and youth leaders (top picture) in addition to women clean energy champions (bottom picture) with their calendars.



AFIEGO IN RADIO TALKSHOW TO EMPOWER COMMUNITIES TO REVIEW AND MAKE COMMENTS ON 2018 LAND ACQUISITION BILL



On February 7, 2020, AFIEGO held a radio talkshow at Spice FM.

The main objective of the radio talkshow was to empower oil-affected communities with knowledge and skills to review and make comments on the 2018 Land Acquisition Bill.

AFIEGO collected communities' views on the bill during the radio talkshow. These views will be submitted to the Ministry of Lands for action.

In the photo are staff and youth during the radio talkshow.

AFIEGO AND CSO PARTNERS IN ENGAGEMENTS WITH EACOP PROJECT DEVELOPERS



On February 13, 2020, AFIEGO and about 45 CSOs working in the oil and gas sector participated in an engagement meeting with the developers of the EACOP project. The meeting took place at Protea Hotel in Kampala.

During the meeting, the progress of the EACOP project and how CSOs' comments on the EACOP ESIA report were addressed were discussed. While the EACOP developers said that some of the comments raised by AFIEGO, our partners and other CSOs were addressed through a revised ESIA that was submitted to NEMA, many concerns such as failure by the EACOP project developers to submit mitigation plans, undervaluation of the EACOP's carbon emissions, failure to submit RAPs as part of the ESIA and others were not addressed.

AFIEGO and our partners will engage NEMA, the EACOP project developers and other stakeholders for these gaps to be addressed.

In the photos are Mr. Maxim Marchenko, the EACOP project director (standing, top photo), AFIEGO's Ms. Diana Nabiruma (with microphone, bottom photo) and other CSO participants during the engagement meeting.



Lobbying

This month, the officials from the Ministry of Energy appeared before parliament's Natural Resources Committee and said that a feasibility study, which is to be undertaken by Bonang Power and Energy Ltd, for construction of a hydropower dam at Murchison falls will go on.

In partnership with 18 CSOs, we issued a communique calling on the president to rescind his directive that allowed the feasibility study to be conducted. We also called on parliament to censure the Minister of Energy who has remained belligerent and is saying that the feasibility study must go on against public interest.

Further, with our partners, we also issued press statements that informed our stakeholders of the oil refinery-affected people's case which was heard on February 21, 2020. We also issued a media release on the outcomes of the court case after it was heard.

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February 24, 2020

COMMUNIQUE CALLING ON PRESIDENT YOWERI MUSEVENI TO STOP FEASIBILITY STUDY FOR A HYDROPOWER DAM AT MURCHISON FALLS Parliament should also censor the minister who presented the resolution to cabinet to allow a study for a dam at Murchison Falls

1. Introduction and background

On February 17, 2020, Africa Institute for Energy Governance (AFIEGO) and our partner civil society organisations (CSOs) held a meeting at AFIEGO's head office in Kampala.

The objective of the meeting, which was participated in by over 18 CSO and community leaders, was to discuss government's insistence on carrying out a feasibility study to develop a dam at one of Uganda's most iconic falls, the Murchison Falls, amidst public resistance.

The meeting was organised after the State minister for energy, Hon. Simon D'Ujanga, appeared before the Natural Resources Committee of parliament on February 11, 2020.

During his appearance, Hon. D'Ujanga told MPs on the Natural Resources Committee that government had signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with Bonang Power and Energy Ltd in December 2019 to conduct a feasibility study for a dam at the Murchison Falls in Murchison Falls National Park (MFNP).

The minister said that the MoU was signed following a directive from the president.

The CSO and community leaders' meeting questioned why government was insisting on developing a dam at a time when investment in hydropower dams have only increased Uganda's indebtedness amidst little to no socio-economic returns and many failures in the energy sector.

The CSO and community leaders at the meeting identified some of the failures the energy sector as being:

- Government has borrowed and invested over \$3 billion in dams and distribution lines in the last five years yet grid electricity access remains low –it stands at 24%.

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February 26, 2020

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Kampala, Uganda

OIL REFINERY CASE HEARING: AFFECTED PEOPLE DECRY ISOLATION AND DISCRIMINATION CAUSED BY POOR RAP IMPLEMENTATION

The oil refinery-affected people have decried the isolation, discrimination and cultural impacts that they are facing due to government failure to implement commitments it made to the refinery-affected people through the 2012 Resettlement Action Plan (RAP) report for the oil refinery project.

The RAP guided the land acquisition process for Uganda's planned oil refinery. The land acquisition, which started in 2012, affected 1, 221 households and 7,118 people.

While appearing before Lady Justice Cornelia Sabiti during the refinery-affected people's case hearing on February 21, 2020, Mr. Christopher Opiio told court that government failure to respect commitments it made in the 2012 RAP had resulted in isolation and discrimination of the oil refinery-affected among other impacts.

Mr. Opiio informed court of the above while he was being cross-examined by government's lawyer during the case hearing at the Kampala High Court.

ISOLATION DUE TO RAP FAILURES

"Government committed to identify land on a case by case basis for each of the households which opted for physical relocation. The RAP also stated that the oil refinery-affected people would not be put in a special resettlement because it would isolate us from the rest of the community."

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February 20, 2020

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Kampala, Uganda

Oil refinery-affected people in court tomorrow The people hope that their case will be concluded this year

Tomorrow on Friday February 21, 2020, the oil refinery-affected people will appear in court for hearing of their case against government. The case hearing will take place at the Kampala High Court.

The oil refinery-affected people filed the court case against government in March 2014 following government failure to pay them prompt, fair and adequate compensation while acquiring their land beginning in 2012 for an oil refinery that will be located in Kabaale, Hoima.

The above failure by government constituted a violation of Article 26 of the 1995 Uganda Constitution which provides for the prompt payment of fair and adequate compensation before government compulsorily acquires citizens' private property.

At the case hearing tomorrow, two refinery-affected government will be cross examined in the morning and afternoon by government's lawyer.

"Court heard our prayer and agreed to fasttrack hearing of the people's case. This is why the case will be heard both in the morning and in the afternoon."

We are happy that court committed to hear the case at a faster pace. The refinery-affected people filed their case in March 2014 before some of them were compensated by government. They had hoped that court would expeditiously decide their case to compel government to pay them adequate compensation before the compensation process was concluded.

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In the media

This month, staff and research associates wrote over 13 newspaper articles which were published in the leading newspapers including the *New Vision* and *Daily Monitor*. Eight newspaper and online media articles were also published from our media engagements.

Some of the published articles are captured below.

Locusts, climate change and oil exploitation



DIANA NABIRUMA

On Sunday, February 9, 2020, media reports indicated that Uganda had been invaded by locusts.

That same day, the 3rd African Union (AU) Heads of State and Government Assembly commenced in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. The two-day meeting was held under the theme: 'Silencing the guns: Creating conducive conditions for Africa's development.'

As the leaders deliberated on topics such as conflict in the Sahel region, sustainable funding of Africa's development agenda and others, scores of Ugandians panicked over the locust invasion. A government inter-ministerial committee met to discuss measures to address the locusts, which the public was informed each insect could eat food that could feed 2,500 people per year.

In addition, army officers and others were shipped off to Karamoja, the site of the reported invasion, to address the threat.

LOCUSTS AND CLIMATE CHANGE

While some of the above was ongoing, the AU Heads of State and others deliberated on matters that would improve the wellbeing of African citizens.

However, they did not discuss how African heads of state in alliance with national and international agricultural, oil and other companies are contributing towards climate change and are exposing Africans to more potential locust invasions.

With the permission of African leaders, activities such as destruction of forests such as Bagmati in Uganda for sugarcane growing and exploitation of fossil fuels (oil, coal and gas) including in excessive areas such as national parks, lakes, rivers and forests in Uganda, Tanzania and Nigeria, among others, are ongoing in Africa today.

Both the burning of fossil fuels and deforestation are drivers of global warming and consequently, climate change.

Yet climate change is part of the reason that Uganda, Kenya and other Eastern African countries are in the predicament they are in today. Moreover, this is a predicament that African countries are ill-equipped to deal with.

As pointed out by the UN Secretary General, Antonio Guterres, warmer cyclones caused by climate change have created the perfect breeding conditions for locusts. Per information from the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO), the warmer cyclones resulted in rains in Oman, which enabled the breeding of the desert locusts.

The locusts invaded Eastern Africa thereafter and have caused serious damage. FAO estimated that 200 billion locusts invaded Kenya. The locusts, which eat their own weight in food every day, destroyed pastures and crops which had only been replanted after drought.

Further, the damage caused by the locusts in Somalia was so much so that the country declared a state of emergency after the insects damaged about 70,000 hectares of food supplies in the country and in Ethiopia. Experience shows that when food and pastures, which are major sources of income for many households, are destroyed, other impacts follow. Income reduce, children's education suffers as parents lack incomes to pay school fees, and even domestic violence due to increased poverty in homes is seen.

OIL AND CLIMATE CHANGE

Now, several countries in Africa including Nigeria, Angola, Cameroon, Niger, Algeria, Equatorial Guinea, Ghana, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) and others are oil producers. In addition, several countries including Uganda, Kenya, Tanzania, Togo and others are planning or are undertaking activities to become coal, oil and gas producers.

The above countries argue that they need to produce coal, oil and gas not only to create jobs but to generate revenues to support their respective economies, among others.

However, the burning of fossil fuels such as coal, oil and gas is the biggest contributor to climate change.

As earlier noted, climate change has been cited as the cause of the biggest locust invasion to be seen in Kenya in 70 years and in 25 years for Somalia and Ethiopia.

To continue to exploit oil to exacerbate climate change is to put the lives of African citizens at risk. Moreover, poorer African states are more vulnerable to the impacts of climate change. African states have too few resources to manage climate change impacts.

Indeed, the Uganda government's response to the locust invasion in Uganda on February 9, 2020, was testament to this. The country had no standby expert manpower and equipment such as airplanes to spray the locusts. Communities in Teso reported that they resorted to making noise to scare the locusts away.

One may argue that oil revenues could be used to make African states climate-resilient. However, experiences from Nigeria, Angola and other oil-producing countries show that oil revenues are never used for the benefit of citizens. Instead, they are largely abused by corrupt government officials at the expense of citizens' wellbeing.

African countries must consider leaving fossil fuels unexploited. They should invest in other economic activities such as agriculture, tourism and others.

The writer is the senior communications officer at Africa Institute for Energy Governance (AFIEGO).

Will companies contribute to clean energy transition?

Sandra Atusinguza




One in every seven people still lack electricity and most of them live in rural areas of the developing world, according to UNDP 2020 report.

Investing in solar, wind and thermal power, improving energy productivity as well as ensuring energy for all is vital if we are to achieve SDG 7 on affordable and clean energy by 2030.

The delayed announcement of the final investment decision on oil has greatly increased doubts of fast-track oil by 2020/2021.

The Government has urged local firms to register on the national supplier data base and talent register. However, there is limited technical capacity and specialised expertise to fully exploit the renewable energy resources potential and this has been a great challenge to fast-track the implementation of the local content policy.

Uganda's oil fields have associated natural gas reserves estimated at 500 billion cubic feet and as some oil and gas companies such as CNOOC plan to produce gas and use some of it to generate up to 42MW of electricity for their use and for sale to the national grid.

This natural gas can be used in several clean energy alternative projects which can help to contribute towards climate change mitigation, national energy security and global energy transition. Oil and gas companies must be adapting to the use of biomass, wind turbines and solar panels for oil field operations and other projects.

The energy and transport ministries should come up with a policy on low carbon transportation and ensure that oil and gas companies adopt it through the use of clean fuel vehicles mainly natural gas (compressed natural gas or liquefied petroleum gas), which is readily available in the Albertine Graben.

Climate change can also be mitigated amidst oil and gas activities through carbon capture and storage. This will result in fewer emissions by capturing carbon and storing it into oil reservoirs.

According to Uganda's energy and mineral sector, in its midterm sector policy objectives, the oil and gas resources must be used to contribute to early achievement of poverty eradication and create lasting value to society.

The oil and gas industry must, therefore, heavily invest in new clean energy business models and technologies to transition to decreasing greenhouse gas emissions and promote energy efficiency in the next phases.

Drillers at the exploration area near Lake Albert. Oil and gas companies must adapt to the use of biomass, wind turbines and solar panels for oil field operations

The writer is a field coordinator at AFIEGO

Explore cheaper forms of power

Uganda is richly endowed with abundant energy resources, which are fairly distributed throughout the country.

The level of utilization of solar energy is still low, requiring increased use of solar PV systems in rural areas as a way of improving rural electricity access. This can make energy access easy for refugee camps, rural health centers rural schools, among others. This can rapidly spur business development and improve the lives of local communities.

Access to the national grid is at just 26 per cent with all the heavy investments that have been made in on-grid power sources and 24 per cent access for off-grid electricity. Therefore, more attention should be put on improving off-grid energy access like the use of solar PV systems that are cheaper. More feasibility studies should be undertaken to harness cheaper energy sources like solar.

On December 2, 2019, cabinet agreed that a feasibility study is undertaken on the Uhuru falls site along the Murchison falls. This comes at a time when the current total installed capacity of electricity in Uganda stands at 1,182.2MW, although this is not reflected in the lives of the majority in Uganda. The country has for years faced challenges of payment of unutilized power from expensive dams.

There is no way we are going to achieve the Sustainable Development Goal 7 of ensuring access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all if we do not explore cheaper renewable energy sources like solar.

There is no need of destroying the beautiful Murchison falls for something that is already not benefiting the majority of Ugandans.

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Govt should compensate the oil-affected people

In 2006, Uganda discovered commercially oil deposits in the Albertine Graben. Government then embarked on establishing effective management procedures to promote growth and development in the country. But the oil extraction has impacted local residents in a number of ways.

For instance, 7,000 members of communities in Buseruka, Hoima District were in fact evicted to pave way for the construction of an oil refinery. They were offered to make a choice between compensation and resettlement. While some residents have been compensated and moved to new settlements, others are yet to receive any compensation. Some of those who opted for compensation rejected the offer after they discovered that their properties had been undervalued.

People living in Hoima complain of undervaluation of their property, payments which do not match agreed compensation rates, and interruption of livelihoods. It is not that the government should compensate them out of pity, but its right as stipulated in Article 26 of the Constitution.

Therefore, as Ugandans, let us stand with oil-affected people and demand that they get compensated as provided for in our laws.

I encourage the government to respect the principles of local content in the oil and gas sector.

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Upcoming events

March 3, 2020; Makerere University: Film screenings of oil experiences in Ecuador, the U.S. and Uganda

March 9-13, 2020; Kasese, Buliisa, Nwoya, Hoima and Kikuube: Seminar to empower stakeholders on oil impacts and citizens' role in promoting clean energy

March 16, 2020; Kampala: Petitioning NEMA to access the presiding officer's report from the Kingfisher and EACOP ESIA public hearings

March 17-20, 2020; Kikuube, Buliisa, Hoima and Kakumiro: Community sensitisation meetings on implementation and compliance with the 2019 National Environmental Act

March 31, 2020; Hoima: Radio talkshow on communities' role in saving Budongo and Bugoma forests from degradation by oil activities and sugarcane growing

About Africa Institute for Energy Governance (AFIEGO)

Africa Institute for Energy Governance (AFIEGO) is a public policy research and advocacy NGO 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 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 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 energy resources for socio-economic development

Our Mission

To promote energy policies that benefit poor and vulnerable communities