



May 2021; Issue 5

SHRINKING CIVIC SPACE & BUGOMA COURT CASE RULING: TWO TRAGEDIES THAT MUST BE CHALLENGED



This month (May), the High Court in Kampala erroneously ruled that NEMA did not violate any laws prior to issuing an ESIA certificate of approval that allowed Hoima Sugar to destroy Bugoma forest.

The ruling endangers forest conservation all over Uganda as well as community livelihoods.



To address the challenge posed by the ruling, the Save Bugoma Forest Campaign (SBFC) met with its lawyers and resolved to appeal the ruling. A notice of appeal was lodged this month.

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- Bugoma and other forests are not safe! Court ruling and arrest of critical civil society actors must be challenged
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Intimidation! Threats! Arrests! These are the oppressive conditions in which civil society organisations (CSOs) and environmental as well as human rights defenders (EHRDs) especially those operating in the oil and gas sector in Uganda work.

And, this month, the ugly monster that is the oppressive civic space in which CSOs and EHRDs work reared its ugly head, not once, but twice.

As we informed you in a May 26, 2021 [press statement](#) that we and our partners issued, AFIEGO's Buliisa district Field Officer, Mr. Maxwell Atuhura, was arrested on May 25, 2021 in Buliisa district. He was arrested alongside an Italian journalist, Ms. Federica Marsi.

Their crime? Doing their jobs.

Mr. Atuhura and Ms. Marsi had been documenting the human rights abuses meted out against the Tilenga oil project-affected communities in Buliisa when they were arrested by police. Ms. Marsi was released on May 25, 2021 while Mr. Atuhura was detained for two nights, first in Buliisa on May 25 and then in Hoima on May 26. He was released on police bond in the evening of May 27, 2021 after being charged with 'unlawful assembly'.

Despite the fact that Mr. Atuhura did not hold any unlawful assemblies and his arrest is part of the intimidation tactics against CSOs, he is expected to periodically report to the Albertine regional police headquarters in Hoima district starting on June 2, 2021. What a tragedy!

Even more so because Mr. Atuhura

and Ms. Marsi's arrests were followed by another of a French journalist in Buliisa on May 28, 2021; the journalist's passport was confiscated by police in Buliisa and was only returned the following day when he was told to leave the district.

The arrests, intimidation and refusing CSOs as well as journalists to meet with communities in Buliisa district have been documented by the media and Human [Rights Watch](#) (HRW) from as far back as 2010.

More than a decade later, these grave civic space challenges remain. If they remain unaddressed, it will become harder for CSOs and EHRDs to defend community livelihood, human and environmental rights.

Yet now more than ever, CSOs, EHRDs and Ugandans need to fight hard to protect their natural resources. This is because major forests such as Bugoma and Budongo, wetlands such as Lwera and the Murchison Falls-Albert Delta Wetland System, lakes such as Victoria and rivers such as the Nile are under immense oil, rice and sugarcane growing pressure.

Institutions such as the National Environment Management Authority (NEMA) and the judiciary that should support the protection of these resources instead support degraders to destroy them. Just this month for instance, on May 7, 2021, High Court judge, Justice Musa Ssekana, dismissed a case through which members of the Save Bugoma Forest Campaign (SBFC) wanted the Environmental and Social Impact Assessment (ESIA) certificate of approval that was issued to Hoima Sugar Ltd (HSL) to be cancelled.

The certificate was issued by NEMA on August 14, 2020. It allowed Hoima Sugar to destroy Bugoma forest for sugarcane growing. The judge erred in his ruling, and his precedence must not be left on the law books as it endangers Uganda's critical environmental resources.

In our **Word from CEO and Partners**, we show how the ruling was flawed and what it means for environmental conservation if the said ruling is not challenged. We also show that the civic space in Uganda must be improved if the country's resources and livelihoods are to be protected.

In our **pictorial** section, we bring you some of the activities that AFIEGO and our partners implemented this month. For instance, with the SBFC national and Bunyoro chapters, we organised meetings in which we met with over 254 community leaders and members from villages around Bugoma forest in Kikuube district. For several months now, AFIEGO and our partners have been engaging the Bugoma forest communities to build momentum for saving the forest from sugarcane growing and oil threats.

Furthermore, AFIEGO and our SBFC partners organised a meeting with the community taskforce that is collecting signatures for a petition to the president and other authorities to save Bugoma and other forests. Over 20,000 community signatures demanding for protection of Bugoma and other forests in the oil region have been collected. AFIEGO also supported the community taskforce to update community members on the status of the petition through radio talkshows and weekly news bulletins.

In addition, following this month's

dismissal of the SBFC High Court case for cancellation of Hoima Sugar Ltd's ESIA certificate, AFIEGO and our SBFC partners held a meeting in which we resolved to appeal the ruling. The notice of appeal was filed to the Court of Appeal this month.

Further, we organised several meetings with the East African Crude Oil Pipeline (EACOP)-affected people to collect evidence for the EACOP case in the East African Court of Justice (EACJ). To promote green economic development in Uganda, we worked with our partners and launched the Inclusive Green Economy Network-East Africa (IGEN-EA). We also implemented other activities which you will read about in the pictorial section.

In our **lobbying** section, we bring you a press statement that we and our SBFC partners issued. We informed the public that the campaign members were going to appeal the High Court dismissal of our case for cancellation of the Hoima Sugar ESIA certificate of approval. We also issued a media release to announce the launch of IGEN-EA.

Finally, in our **in the media** section, we bring you some of the over 12 newspaper articles that were written by our staff and partners and published by the media. We also bring you some of the 13 media articles that were published by the national and international press following interviews with AFIEGO staff.

We hope you enjoy the newsletter.

Editorial team:

Diana Nabiruma

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Rachael Amongin

Balach Bakundane

BUGOMA AND OTHER FORESTS ARE NOT SAFE! COURT RULING AND ARREST OF CRITICAL CIVIL SOCIETY ACTORS MUST BE CHALLENGED

Before the tenth parliament concluded its business this month (May), Hon. Idah Nantaba, the Kayunga Woman Member of Parliament (MP) made an impassioned speech about the travails of protecting forests in Uganda.

She was reacting to a loan request by government. Government was purportedly seeking the loan approval from parliament so it could borrow, restore protected areas and support environmental conservation.

Hon. Nantaba called out government over its lies.

“Right Hon. Speaker...,” she said, “The Minister of Finance knows that parliament is agitated with loan approvals and he has learned a way of packaging [loan requests] for parliament to approve quickly ...

He knows that when he brings a loan [request] touching on environmental conservation and restoration of our protected areas that are in a bad state, people will support.

But, to add my voice to Hon. Nandala's, this is money that is going to be thrown to the dogs... You can't see results when some forests are already registered in the names of big fish...”

Hon. Nantaba went on to describe an intricate style in which forests such as Bugoma and forest land is grabbed.

She said, “NFA allows deforestation and once a full forest is depleted, the land grabbers move in. And when NFA runs to court, it is always a game between

NFA and the big fish... [During court processes], the land grabber says ‘I didn't find a tree here and I bought this land from the district land board’...”

Hon. Nantaba observed that Kayunga's forests had been grabbed through the above process.

She said, “[Of] Kayunga's three forests, two are gone... Someone has moved in and is planting sugarcane...

Some forests like Bugoma are [also] already on the way.”



Roads to allow tractors to move into Bugoma forest and destroy it were created this month, the Save Bugoma Forest community taskforce reported (L).

Tractors are destroying the forest (R) which could lead to more land grabbers claiming the forest land.

BUGOMA FOREST DESTRUCTION

The destruction of Bugoma forest is taking the trajectory that Hon. Nantaba described in parliament. Not only were freehold and leasehold land titles covering Bugoma forest issued to Bunyoro Kitara Kingdom and Hoima Sugar Ltd respectively in 2016, government agencies such as the National Environment Management Authority (NEMA) supported the destruction of the forest.

This was through issuing an illegal Environmental and Social Impact Assessment (ESIA) certificate of approval to Hoima Sugar in August 2020, effectively permitting the company to destroy Bugoma forest.

On May 7, 2021, the High court in Kampala further legitimised this destruction when it dismissed a court case filed by some members of the Save Bugoma Forest Campaign (SBFC). The SBFC sought a court declaration that NEMA's actions of issuing the ESIA certificate were illegal. They also prayed for cancellation of Hoima Sugar's ESIA certificate of approval by court. The court case was filed in September 2020.

This month (May), court ruled that NEMA did not violate Uganda's environmental laws prior to issuance of the ESIA certificate of approval as the SBFC members averred.

ERRORS IN JUDGEMENT

Was the judge right? Respectfully, the SBFC members affirm that the judge erred in both the law and facts, thus arriving at an erroneous decision.

Various laws provide for the conduct of, review and decision-making on ESIA studies in Uganda. Among these include the 2019 National Environment Act, 1998 Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) regulations and others.

When the SBFC members filed the case for declaring NEMA's actions illegal and for cancellation of Hoima Sugar Ltd's ESIA certificate of approval, they including AFIEGO argued that NEMA violated key provisions under Parts III

and V of the 1998 EIA regulations. Part III of the regulations provides for how ESIA studies are to be conducted while Part V lays down the review process for ESIA studies.

The SBFC members made the following arguments for cancellation of Hoima Sugar Ltd's ESIA certificate of approval.

(a) Community consultation gone wrong: The SBFC argued that Regulation 12 of the 1998 EIA regulations requires a developer to take all measures necessary to seek the views of the people in the communities which may be affected by the project. The community views are supposed to be sought by the developer during the process of conducting an ESIA study.

As such, Hoima Sugar Ltd ought to have consulted communities from over 30 villages around Bugoma forest during the ESIA study for its Kyangwali Mixed Land Use project. The law also required the developer to consult lead agencies such as the National Forestry Authority (NFA), Uganda Wildlife Authority (UWA), Kikuube district local government and others. However, the company didn't and in our submissions to court, SBFC members including AFIEGO indicated that this was contrary to the law.

Unfortunately, the judge who presided over our case ruled that "The 2nd respondent [Hoima Sugar Ltd] consulted with the community at Nsozi Primary School and over 85 people attended this meeting".

The judge expressed satisfaction that this was adequate consultation. With Hoima Sugar's project affecting an estimated

population of over 20,000 people in over 30 villages however, it was unreasonable for the court to conclude that consultation of only 85 people from one village was sufficient especially for a project that will impact one of the most critical ecosystems in Uganda.

(b) Misinterpretation of the law:

Further, the SBFC argued that Regulation 19 requires NEMA's Executive Director to within ten days of receiving the comments of the lead agency, and if he is satisfied that the environmental impact statement is complete, to invite the general public to make written comments on the environmental impact statement.

The invitation is supposed to be made in a newspaper having national or local circulation among others.

Despite this provision, NEMA did not invite the general public to make comments on the Hoima Sugar ESIA report.

In the SBFC court case, we argued that in so doing, NEMA denied the public an opportunity to participate in the Hoima Sugar ESIA decision-making processes, contrary to the law. We demanded for cancellation of the ESIA certificate to Hoima Sugar Ltd as a result.

In his ruling however, the judge noted that the consultation of 85 people in Kikuube district by Hoima Sugar Ltd was adequate.

Not only is this wrong as the 85 people from the Bugoma forest community do not constitute the general Ugandan public but the judge also failed to differentiate between NEMA and a

developer's obligations as provided for under regulations 19 and 12 respectively. Regulation 19 requires NEMA, and not a developer to consult the general public. A formula for inviting for public comments is also provided. NEMA failed on this but court failed to hold it responsible.

(c) Community consultation by NEMA:

Furthermore, the judge failed to correctly interpret Regulation 20 which requires NEMA to invite for comments, through the mass media among others, of the persons specifically affected by a project to make comments on the ESIA report. NEMA did not seek the affected communities' comments but in his ruling, the judge observed that Hoima Sugar Ltd's consultation of 85 community people was sufficient. This was wrong as NEMA, and not the developer, is duty-bound by Regulation 20 of the 1998 EIA regulations to seek the directly-affected communities' comments after receiving an ESIA study report from a developer.

(d) Sanctioning secret dealings:

It is notable that instead of inviting the general public and directly affected communities to make comments on Hoima Sugar Ltd's ESIA report, NEMA wrote secret letters to only five government agencies and invited for comments from them. These agencies included the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry Sector Support Department of the Ministry of Water and Environment, NFA, UWA and Kikuube district local government. A letter to Bunyoro Kingdom was also written.

In his ruling, the judge argued that consultation of the above parties constituted adequate public consultation. However, the secret

invitation of comments from the government agencies while ignoring the general public violated Regulations 19 and 20 of the 1998 EIA regulations.

(e) Mandatory public hearings:

Furthermore, the judge failed to find NEMA culpable over its failure to hold a public hearing on Hoima Sugar Ltd's ESIA report. Regulation 21 makes it mandatory for NEMA to organise a public hearing on an ESIA report for a project that is controversial or one that has transboundary impacts.

Considering the ongoing court cases filed by NFA, parliamentary debates and scores of petitions written to NEMA and other agencies to save Bugoma forest from Hoima Sugar Ltd's project, the company's project is controversial. In his ruling however, the judge noted that the Executive Director of NEMA was not bound to hold any public hearing since there was no controversy or transboundary impacts. This was wrong.

(f) Court bias: The SBFC members filed a court case seeking justice based on evidence. Unfortunately, the High Court accused the applicants of wasting court's time. The court said the applicants were just seeking public attention without any real cause for alarm. In our view, these statements show that either the judge had a personal issue with the applicants or he lacks appreciation of the environmental conservation challenges facing our country.

RECOMMENDATIONS

What should be done in view of the

above?

(i) This month, the SBFC filed a notice of appeal to appeal the ruling. The campaign's appeal case should be supported as it aims at guaranteeing the protection of Uganda's forests and other eco-resources. If the judge's ruling is left on the law books, it will act as a precedent that will be used to stop public participation in ESIA processes, giving corrupt government agencies the opportunity they need to connive with land grabbers to destroy Uganda's forests, wetlands and others.

(ii) In addition, government and other stakeholders should train judicial officers to understand the importance of making the right decisions in environmental cases.

(iii) Government should also fasttrack the process of putting in place specialised environmental courts to protect the country's environmental resources.

(iv) Communities should engage their leaders including the president among others to stop Hoima Sugar Ltd's wanton destruction of Bugoma forest.

(v) Finally, Ministry of Lands should fasten the process of opening the Bugoma forest boundaries to provide evidence as to where the land claimed by Hoima Sugar Ltd lies. The opening of the Bugoma forest boundaries should be conducted by an independent body and not the Ministry of Lands.

By CEO and partners

Pictorial of our activities

April 25-26, 2021

AFIEGO and our partners organised community meetings for over 254 community leaders and members who live around Bugoma forest in Kikuube district.

During the engagements, the role of forests in community and national economic transformation was discussed as a means of strengthening the community conservation agenda.

Community leaders and members reiterated their commitment to seeing Bugoma forest being saved from oil and sugarcane threats.

April 25-26, 2021

AFIEGO and our partners also used the aforementioned meetings with the Bugoma forest community leaders and members to discuss national and community interventions for saving the forest.

Communities expressed interest in signing the petition to the president to save the forest. They also supported the court processes to save the forest.



May 26, 2021

In addition to our community meetings, AFIEGO and our partners organised a meeting with the community taskforce that is engaged in efforts to save Bugoma forest.

The meeting took place at Kolping Hotel in Hoima district.

During the engagements, efforts to save Bugoma forest by the taskforce were deliberated on. So far, the taskforce has collected 20,000 community signatures for a petition to the president to save Bugoma forest.

May 26, 2021

Following the meeting, AFIEGO supported the taskforce to participate in a radio talkshow at Spice FM in Hoima district.

During the talkshow, AFIEGO shared the next steps being taken by the SBFC following dismissal of the campaign's case for cancellation of Hoima Sugar Ltd's ESIA certificate of approval.

The taskforce shared information on the status of collecting signatures for the petition to the president to save Bugoma forest.



May 17, 2021

Following the dismissal of the Save Bugoma Forest Campaign's (SBFC) court case, the campaign members and their lawyers held a meeting in Kampala and discussed the ruling.

The meeting agreed to appeal the judge's decision. A notice of appeal was filed on May 20, 2021.



May 7-8, 2021

Away from our Bugoma work, this month, AFIEGO worked with our partners to conduct door-to-door meetings to collect evidence from nearly 40 people whose land is being acquired for the East African Crude Oil Pipeline (EACOP) project.

The people's land rights are being abused. The evidence will be used in our court case in the East African Court of Justice.

The case is set to be heard on July 2, 2021.



May 12, 2021

In addition to our work above, AFIEGO supported our CSO partners from the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) to carry out awareness raising activities on the impacts of oil.

The partners organised a film screening for CSO partners, distributed Information, Education and Communication (IEC) materials and shared radio bulletins.



May 21, 2021

This month, AFIEGO and our partners launched the Inclusive Green Economy Network-East Africa (IGEN-EA).

The network seeks to promote an inclusive green economy. It brings together over 20 CSO and private sector leaders working in the small-scale agriculture, fisheries, tourism, clean renewable energy, forestry and other green sectors.

The network was launched by Mr. Sunday George Bob, the focal person for organic agriculture from the Ministry of Agriculture.



May 25-27, 2021

AFIEGO's Buliisa Field Officer, Mr. Maxwell Atuhura, was arrested and detained on May 25, 2021 by police in Buliisa district.

He was transferred to Hoima regional police on May 26, 2021. He spent the night in the police cells in Hoima.

He was released on police bond on May 27, 2021 following our and our partners' efforts. He was charged with unlawful assembly.

Mr. Atuhura was interviewing Tilenga-affected people alongside Italian journalist, Ms. Federica Marsi, when they were arrested. He and the journalist weren't engaged in any unlawful activities.


Mr. Atuhura was interviewing Tilenga-affected people alongside Italian journalist, Ms. Federica Marsi, when they were arrested. He and the journalist weren't engaged in any unlawful activities.



This month, AFIEGO and our partners under the Save Bugoma Forest Campaign filed a notice of appeal to enable us appeal the dismissal of our case for cancellation of Hoima Sugar Ltd's ESIA certificate of approval.

AFIEGO and our partners also issued a press statement through which we showed why we would appeal the aforementioned dismissal of our case.

Furthermore, AFIEGO and our partners issued a media release through which we informed the public about the launch of IGEN-EA.



SAVE BUGOMA FOREST CAMPAIGN 2020
PROTECT UGANDAN CHIMPANZEES, FOREST LIFE MATTERS

May 20, 2021

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
KAMPALA

SAVE BUGOMA FOREST CAMPAIGN TO APPEAL COURT DECISION ON BUGOMA FOREST

The Save Bugoma Forest Campaign (SBFC) will this Friday May 21, 2021 appeal the ruling through which the High Court dismissed a case filed by the SBFC.

Through the case that was ruled on on May 7, 2021 by Justice Musa Sekana, SBFC members sought court's intervention to quash the Environmental and Social Impact Assessment (ESIA) certificate of approval that was issued to Hoima Sugar Ltd (HSL).

The certificate was issued in August 2020 by the National Environment Management Authority (NEMA), allowing Hoima Sugar to destroy Bugoma forest for sugarcane growing among other 'developments'.


While the SBFC is respectful of courts, members are of the unequivocal view that the judge erred in his grounds for dismissing the case.

Moreover, if the judge's decision is left unchallenged, the mafia groups that are intent on grabbing all Uganda's forests and wetlands while being aided by some corrupt government agencies and officials who have continued to misuse and abuse our laws will be given the legal cover that they need to completely destroy the country's important ecosystems areas.

This must be guarded against.

COURT CASE BACKGROUND

In September 2020, SBFC members filed a High Court case for cancellation of the ESIA certificate that was issued to Hoima Sugar by NEMA. In the case, the SBFC members argued that both NEMA and Hoima Sugar Ltd committed procedural irregularities and violated



INCLUSIVE GREEN ECONOMY NETWORK-EAST AFRICA
Kampala, Uganda • Website: www.igen-ea.org • Email: info@igen-ea.org

21/May/2021

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
KAMPALA, UGANDA

EAST AFRICAN NETWORK SEEKING TO PROMOTE AN INCLUSIVE GREEN ECONOMY LAUNCHED

Today, a new network of Ugandans and East Africans from across civil society and the private sector have united to promote a new vision for a green East African economy. Named the **Inclusive Green Economy Network-East Africa (IGEN-EA)**, the network was officially launched in Kampala, Uganda today.

The network's mission is to support the realisation of green investments in key economic sectors that create opportunities for all Ugandans, while promoting environmental conservation, climate resilience and human rights protection. The network is focused on promoting and attracting investment to small-scale organic agriculture, fisheries, tourism, clean energy, agro-forestry and others.

The network was launched by a key Ugandan leader, Hon. Michael Mawanda, and the launch was participated in by political, technical, civil society and private sector leaders as well as community members that operate in Uganda and East Africa's biggest green economic sectors such as small-scale organic agriculture, fisheries, tourism, clean energy and others.

"Uganda is endowed with natural resources such as forests, fertile soils, lakes and others that have sustained the Ugandan economy through supporting agriculture, fisheries, tourism and other economic activities.

Combined, the agriculture, forestry, fisheries and tourism sectors contribute 30.8% of Uganda's GDP. Yet these sectors are under-invested in by the Ugandan government. For instance, in the 2021/2022 budget, the agricultural sector, which employs over 70% of Uganda's labourforce especially women, was allocated only UGX 500 billion. Security and infrastructural developments were allocated UGX 3.4 trillion and UGX 3.1 trillion respectively," Mr. Dickens Kamugisha, the CEO of Africa Institute for Energy Governance (AFIEGO) and chairperson of IGEN-EA, says.



148/2021

THE REPUBLIC OF UGANDA

IN THE HIGH COURT OF UGANDA AT KAMPALA

(CIVIL DIVISION)

CONSOLIDATED MISCELLANEOUS CAUSE NOS. 239 & 255 OF 2020

1. WATER & ENVIRONMENT MEDIA NETWORK (U) LTD

2. NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF PROFESSIONAL ENVIRONMENTALISTS (NAPE)

3. AFRICA INSTITUTE FOR ENERGY GOVERNANCE

VERSUS

1. NATIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT AUTHORITY

2. HOIMA SUGAR LIMITED

APPLICANTS

RESPONDENTS

NOTICE OF APPEAL

TAKE NOTICE that WATER & ENVIRONMENT MEDIA NETWORK (U) LTD (WEMNET), NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF PROFESSIONAL ENVIRONMENTALISTS (NAPE) & AFRICA INSTITUTE FOR ENERGY GOVERNANCE (AFIEGO) being dissatisfied with the decision of HIS LORDSHIP MUSA SEKAANA delivered on the 7th day of May 2021 and the orders therefrom, intends to appeal against the entire decision.


As such we pray to be availed with certified copies of the ruling and typed record of proceedings to enable us pursue our clients' intended Appeal.

THE address of service of the Intending Appellants is C/O M/s Kasadha & Partners Co. Advocates, Plot 247, Rubaga Road, Access Building (Opp. Hotel Soyocalo) 1st Floor, (East Wing) Suites No. 506-507, P.O. Box 24849, Kampala, AND M/s Kaganzi & Co. Advocates (Kampala Branch), Plot 90 Ben Kiwanuka Street, (Opp. Wabito Church), Kab House 2nd Floor, suites 10 & 11, P.O. Box 125 Kampala. Tel. No. +256 394816581 E-mail: info@kasadhavocates.com.

It is intended to serve copies of this notice on: The Respondents

Dated at Kampala this 18th day of May 2021


 For: M/s Kaganzi & Co. Advocates (Kampala Branch)
 Joint - Advocate for the Intended Appellants



In the media

This month, staff, research associates and youth champions wrote over 12 newspaper articles that were published in the leading newspapers. The media also published over 13 articles from the media interviews we held this month. Some of the published articles are captured below.

We need Bugoma forest, not sugarcane

Recently, the media reported about a High court decision in Kampala dismissing the Bugoma case, which was filed by environmentalists challenging the National Environment Management Authority (NEMA's) approval of the environment social impact assessment certificate to Hoima Sugarcane Limited in Bugoma forest found in Kikuube district. The court ruling said that complainants just wanted to attract the attention of the public and to justify their existence as bodies concerned with environment protection and awareness.

This is wrong because nobody in the country would like this part of the forest to go to such development, which does not contribute much to the country's economy, environment and people's livelihoods. The role of

non-governmental organizations is to fill gaps left by the government. Therefore, these NGOs were right to fight for this forest which has been massively destroyed since 2016.

It should be noted that for several years the Busoga region has been growing sugarcane, many people are still unemployed, suffering from shortage of food for their families and are among the poorest in Uganda.

Sugarcane growing shouldn't take away our only central forest reserve.

Recently, the government of Uganda was seeking a Shs 286 billion loan to restore forests and protect national parks. The government said that the funds were meant to improve the management of 1,157,073 hectares in 28 central forest reserves, seven national parks and four wildlife

reserves in the Albertine and west Nile region. This is a contradiction. The same government borrowing a lot of money to support tree planting campaigns across the country is the same government allowing investors to carry out developments in protected eco-sensitive areas.

Uganda should know that when our forests are turned into sugarcane growing, a lot of negative impacts are going to happen, such as flooding of the Bugoma host communities, human-animal conflicts, prolonged droughts and outbreak of new diseases resulting from the interactions of animals and people due to the destruction of the former's habitats.

Paul Kato,
Katop.adyee@gmail.com

CONSERVE ENVIRONMENT TO STOP DISEASE SPREAD

EDITOR: According to research by scientists this year, the loss of habitats and overexploitation of wildlife, compounded by climate change, are the driving factors of disease and outbreak of new pandemics, which endanger human health by expanding transmission pathways from wildlife to humans.

Habitat destruction and wildlife consumption increase the rate of interaction between humans and disease-carrying animals, exposing our most vulnerable frontline communities and our entire species to new pathogens.

Habitat fragmentation and changes in the populations of different species can throw ecosystems off balance, eroding the built-in checks and balances that reduce and regulate the risk of disease and cost future generations undiscovered medical breakthroughs in vanishing biodiversity, as well as reduce the community's ability to cope.

Loss of natural areas translates into fewer spaces for people to enjoy the great outdoors.

COVID-19 is a zoonosis or infectious

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disease that spreads to humans from non-human animals such as monkeys and bats. Almost two thirds of all emerging diseases are zoonoses and 71% originated in wildlife. These include some of the deadliest recent pandemics, including HIV/AIDS, Ebola, severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS) and now COVID-19.

Uganda is likely to suffer more from the outbreaks of the new diseases because of the destruction of critical biodiversities, such as forests and wetlands, which are wildlife habitats.

The country is likely to get more new diseases due to massive destruction of wetland forests such as Bugoma Central

Forest Bunyoro, Zoka Forest in northern Uganda, Mabira Forest in the central region as well as wetlands.

The country should know that nature is connected to human health from the inherent mechanisms through which ecosystems regulate the emergence of new pathogens to the health benefits of spending time outdoors. Through the destruction of the earth's natural resources, we are losing these free services and are reducing our resilience to new diseases.

Some of the deadliest new diseases have arisen when the natural barriers between human and animal populations are breached. Dangerous close contact and prolonged exposure occurs when people encroach on wildlife habitats or bring wild animals into human communities.

I call on the Government and other key authorities to ensure that our sensitive biodiversities are conserved in order to reduce dangerous human-wildlife interactions, which contribute to out break of new diseases.

Paul Kato

Don't destroy the environment for oil developments

EDITOR: The developments in Uganda's oil and gas industry have since transitioned from the exploration and appraisal phase in 2006 to the development phase in 2019, with production expected to start in 2023.

Uganda, Tanzania and oil companies have already signed production agreements for the Final Investment Decision of the East African Crude Oil Pipeline oil projects.

While this progress is being made, globally, there is growing concern among stakeholders over the continued mismanagement of development activities, such as oil, electricity and other large scale projects that have contributed to the degradation of ecosystems.

Such concerns have made it necessary for the planning authorities to count on sound information about the possible environmental consequences that result

from such oil activities. Oil exploration and drilling is one of the sectors that result in major impacts, such as deforestation and ecosystem destruction.

Uganda is blessed with the huge potential of renewable energy in the form of solar and wind power, among others. If we invested in our renewable energy as well, the country would generate much more revenue.

Rachael Amongin

Involve women in promoting clean energy

Renewable energy, often referred to as clean energy, comes from natural sources or processes that are constantly replenished. For example, sunlight or wind.

Dirty energy is shorthand for energy production that accelerates climate change and harms communities. Many dirty energy projects involve the extraction or burning of fossil fuels (oil, gas and coal) for electric generation, which releases carbon dioxide into the atmosphere.

Gender participation in the energy transition impacts multiple Sustainable Development Goals. Specifically, there is an interplay between the goals for "gender equality and empowerment" and "affordable clean energy".

Throughout the history of global energy

development, energy transition has exhibited two major trends. One is toward steadily higher energy intensity from firewood and coal to oil, natural gas, and electric power.

Despite being low-intensity energy sources by nature, clean energy like hydro, wind and solar power can become high-intensity energy after transformation into electricity as an energy source of high quality, accessibility and efficiency. The intensity of clean energy will be further manifested especially if and when breakthroughs in energy storage technology are achieved. The other trend of energy transition is one toward an increasingly lower carbon content of energy from firewood to coal, then from oil, to oil, and further to the rapid development of natural gas, reflecting a direction

towards cleaner energy.

It is important to note that renewable energy is mostly needed by women to address their needs.

Unfortunately, before the energy transition came up, women especially in rural areas took part in the destruction of the environment through cutting trees for charcoal and firewood, destroying wetlands for farming, bush burning and zero grazing, among others. All these factors affect wildlife habitats and cause negative impacts on the environment. It is, therefore, very clear that the just clean energy transition has improved and protected the environment from being destroyed.

Women are not just a special interest group in renewable energy; they are mainstream users and often producers of energy. Without their

involvement, renewable energy projects risk being inappropriate, and failing. Women are the main users of household energy in developing and industrial countries; they influence or make many family purchases related to energy; they are experienced entrepreneurs in energy-related enterprises.

Energy policymakers who ignore women's needs will be failing to make use of a powerful force for renewable energy development.

Irene Twongyirwe,
Kampala.



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Global development

Campaigners lose court case to stop Ugandan forest clearance

Court ruling gives go-ahead for sugar plantation in Bugoma forest, home to endangered chimpanzees



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About this content

Upcoming events

June 7-11, 2021; Hoima, Kikuube, Kakumiro and Mubende: Community sensitisation meetings on implementation of land laws and RAPs for the EACOP project

June 10-11; Kampala: Workshop to strengthen extractives CSOs to participate in the Universal Periodic Review for Uganda

June 14, 2021; Kampala: Petitioning of the president and other stakeholders to save Bugoma forest from destruction

June 15, 2021; Kampala: National press conference by Bugoma forest communities to appeal for saving of the forest

June 18, 2021; Kampala: AFIEGO Board members mid-year evaluation meeting

June 22, 2021; Kanungu: Seminar to empower stakeholders on oil impacts and citizens' role in promoting clean energy

June 30, 2021: District political and technical leaders' engagement meetings for effective implementation of EACOP RAPs

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 clean 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