



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

29th/August/2022

Hon. Judith Nabakooba
Minister of Lands, Housing and Urban Development (MLHUD),
Kampala (U).

Dear Madam,



**RE: INVITE INDEPENDENT STAKEHOLDERS TO PARTICIPATE IN BUGOMA
FOREST BOUNDARY OPENING**

Introduction

Greetings from the Save Bugoma Forest Campaign (SBFC), a coalition of civil society and private sector players whose main objective is to protect Bugoma forest from oil, sugarcane and land grabbing threats.

The SBFC appreciates the work that you and your ministry are doing to ensure that Uganda's forests are protected from land grabbing pressures. Particularly, the SBFC appreciates you for listening to our calls to open the Bugoma forest boundaries to protect the forest from sugarcane growing and land grabbing threats.

After two failed attempts to open the Bugoma forest boundaries between November and December 2021 as well as in February 2022, your ministry once again started opening the forest's boundaries this month (August).

In an August 16, 2022 communication shared with various stakeholders, the MLHUD indicated that the boundary opening process for Bugoma forest had been kickstarted once again. The ministry invited local communities and other stakeholders to be cooperative.

While we appreciate your valiant efforts to open the forest boundaries, we remain fearful that the ongoing processes are aimed at redrawing Bugoma forest's boundaries to allow Hoima Sugar Ltd to continue growing sugarcane in the forest. This suspicion is created by two facts: one is that no professional independent stakeholders have been formally invited to participate in the ongoing boundary opening processes.

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Furthermore, the Ministry of Lands that is currently leading on the Bugoma forest boundary opening is the one that issued the freehold and leasehold titles to Bunyoro Kitara Kingdom (BKK) and Hoima Sugar Ltd (HSL) respectively in Bugoma forest.

Mr. E.W. Ogaro, the Commissioner for Surveys and Mapping at your ministry, is the one who testified in court in favour of BKK and HSL against the National Forestry Authority (NFA). This was after NFA sued BKK and HSL for acquiring illegal land titles covering 8,000 hectares in Bugoma forest.

Mr. Ogaro stated in court that the BKK land was not part of Bugoma forest. How can Ugandans trust him to lead the current boundary opening for Bugoma forest?

We demand that the Bugoma forest boundaries be opened with independent surveyors and representatives of various stakeholders and NOT by Mr. E.W. Ogaro and his group.

The SBFC and Ugandans shall reject any Bugoma forest boundary opening report that is from a boundary opening process that was carried out without independent and professional oversight. This oversight should be provided by representatives of the SBFC, Institution of Surveyors-Uganda, Inter-Religious Council of Uganda (IRCU), Uganda Law Society (ULS), the forest host communities and others.

PREVIOUS ENGAGEMENTS

Hon. Minister, in 2020 and 2021, the SBFC engaged NFA and your ministry to open the Bugoma forest boundaries. Particularly, on February 3, 2021, the SBFC held a meeting with MLHUD officials including Mr. Ogaro, Mr. Vianney J. Lutaaya, whom we were informed would be the lead surveyor for the Bugoma forest boundary opening exercise, Mr. Henry Opio, an Assistant Commissioner and others.

During that meeting that took place at the MLHUD's headquarters in Kampala, the MLHUD indicated that the Bugoma forest boundary opening would commence. Among others, the following was agreed on:

- The MLHUD would formally write to stakeholders including the SBFC, Institution of Surveyors-Uganda, ULS, IRCU and others to invite them to participate in the boundary opening exercise.
- The MLHUD would share the Terms of Reference (ToR) for the Bugoma boundary opening with the SBFC.
- The SBFC would work with the survey team to mobilise and sensitise communities as part of the boundary opening exercise.

Unfortunately, the boundary opening exercise did not commence after the aforementioned meeting. Consequently, on October 20, 2021, the SBFC wrote a letter to you. We requested for a meeting to discuss the stalled boundary opening and the threats local communities were facing as a result of failure to open the forest boundaries.

You agreed to meet with the SBFC. On October 29, 2021, the campaign members including local communities met with MLHUD officials at the ministry’s headquarters in Kampala. During that meeting, you, honourable minister, were represented by Mr. Richard Jjuko, the undersecretary of the MLHUD. Other MLHUD officials at the meeting included Mr. Henry Opio Ogenyi, an Acting Commissioner, and others.

During the meeting, the MLHUD informed the SBFC that the ministry and NFA would begin the Bugoma forest boundary opening exercise on November 2, 2021. The ministry also reiterated its commitment to ensuring that key stakeholders such as the SBFC are involved in the boundary opening exercise.

It is on this basis and a desire to protect Bugoma forest that we make the following requests:

- Formally invite representatives of the SBFC, Institution of Surveyors-Uganda, ULS, IRCU, local communities and others to participate in the boundary opening process to promote transparency and credibility of the boundary opening results.
- Update the public on the ongoing boundary opening through the media.
- Ensure that credible results are shared with the public.

In conclusion Hon. Minister, we emphasise and call on government to avoid using the ongoing Bugoma forest boundary opening to illegally change the boundaries of Bugoma forest, reduce its size and destroy local communities that live around the forest. The Ministry of Lands should not open the boundaries as a means of legitimising the giveaway of part of Bugoma forest to Hoima Sugar Ltd.

We thank you in advance for your cooperation in this matter.

Yours faithfully,

Dickens Kamugisha

Chairperson, SBFC-national taskforce

Hassan Mugenyi

Chairperson, SBFC-local taskforce

OTHER SIGNATORIES

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CC

- The Prime Minister of Uganda
- Minister of Water and Environment
- The Chairperson, Natural Resources Committee of Parliament
- The Head of Delegation, European Union and all EU Ambassadors in Uganda
- The National Physical Planning Board of Uganda
- The Executive Director, NFA
- The Executive Director, National Environment Management Authority (NEMA)

- The Chairperson, Inter-Religious Council of Uganda
- President, Uganda Law Society
- President, Institution of Surveyors-Uganda