

A photograph of a lush green forest with a rocky stream flowing through it. The stream is surrounded by dense vegetation and rocks, creating a natural, scenic view. The text is overlaid on the top half of the image.

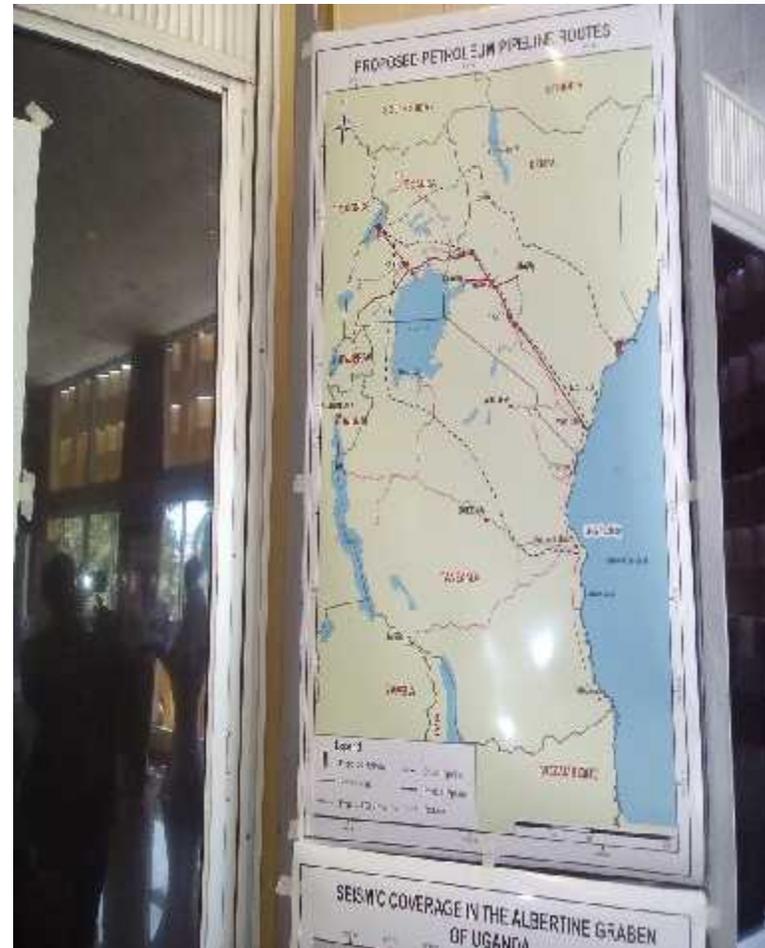
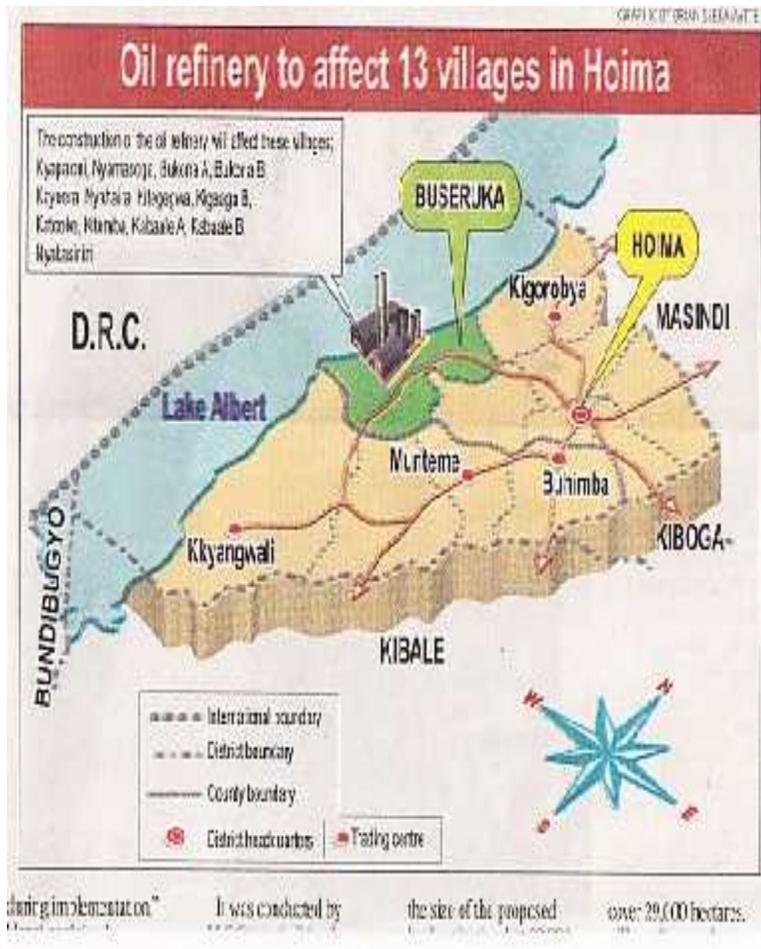
Is Uganda prepared to conserve our environment and other NRs amidst oil threats?

Presentation by AFIEGO at a Public Talk Organized by NatureUganda-Kampala, 2 August 2018

Presentation outline

- ❖ Back ground to oil exploration and exploitation in Uganda.
- ❖ What do we hear from the government?
- ❖ What do we know as realities on the ground?
- ❖ What needs to be done to lessen the threats of oil on the environment and NRs as we enjoy the benefits by 2020 and beyond?

Maps on oil production plans



Background-oil exploration and exploitation

- Since 2001, over 7 oil companies have been engaged in Uganda's oil sector (Energy Africa, Hardman, Heritage, Dominion, Tullow Oil, Total E&P Uganda, CNOOC, Albertine Graben Refinery Consortium (AGRC) and others).
- 6.5 billion barrels of oil reserves confirmed.
- The above reserves are located in a critical biodiversity region with lakes, rivers, forests, mountains, wildlife, endangered tribes, etc.
- The area remains the most insecure region in the country-bordering with Easter DRC.
- **question-how does the government plan to exploit our black gold in a manner that maximizes benefits and safeguards our environment/people?**

What do we hear from the government?

- That the country is in the process of building a 1,445km export oil pipeline and a 30,000-60,000 barrel capacity refinery, start production by 2020-2023.
- That oil production infrastructure will cost the country over \$15 billion.
- That approximately 160,000 people will get jobs of some kind.
- That the 3 oil companies (Tullow, Total E&P and CNOOC) negotiating production have been issued with production licenses and the **Albertine Graben Refinery Consortium (AGRC)** is ready to build a refinery.
- That the government is in the final stages of completing a Final Investment Decision with companies.
- That the required oil laws are in place to enable government regulate the oil sector for maximum benefits.

What we hear contns

- That the Constitutional provision on land (Art 26) is being amended to promote equitable land acquisition for the benefit of both the land owners and government for quick development.
- Government admits that the existing environmental laws listed below have weaknesses and need to be improved to manage the threats of oil production:
 - National Environmental Bill-before Parliament
 - Review of the Wildlife Act,
 - Review of the EIA and SEA regulations,
 - Review of the Wetlands Policy,
 - Enacting a Climate Change law
 - And other related laws on water, pollution and others.

Question: But is weak laws our biggest problem today? What about poor enforcement and compliance?

What we hear on the issue of National Content

- That under the National Content policy, the following steps are being undertaken:
 - Establishment of a Technician Training Fund (TTF)-Kigumba and Kicwamba,
 - Establishment of a Suppliers Support Fund (SSF),
 - Establishment of the National Content Steering Committee (NCSC),
 - Creation of a Welding Center of Excellence (WCE), and
 - Creation of a National Talent Register (NTR),

Question: how do the above efforts contribute to safeguarding environment and people amidst oil threats?

What do we see as realities on the ground?

- Still operating based on environmental laws that have been declared by the government to be outdated.
- No legal framework for SEA and ESIA-ESIA in Tilenga.
- No information on the trade-offs Ugandans need to prepare for to enjoy oil benefits.
- No information on the environmental and economic impact of a poor country to borrow and spend over \$15 billion on oil production by 2023?
- No clear strategy on how the government plans to safeguard agriculture, water, air and others from possible oil pollution?
- Over 50,000 communities have been displaced or affected to give way for oil production without fair compensation and justice-High Court case since 2014.

Realities we know contn

- No date set for commencing a decommissioning fund.
- No practical strategy for sustaining and improving tourism amidst oil threats?
- No link between the national content policy and the efforts to conserve environment amidst oil threats.
- Corruption continues to undermine every effort of government and private sector to deliver the common good.
- No strategy to strengthen governance institutions.
- No strategy to ensure effective legal enforcement-**political** abuse everywhere.

What needs to be done to protect environment/people

- Only empowered citizens have the capacity to pressure government to minimize oil threats on the environment/people. **Laws are good but nothing if the citizens are weak.**
- Citizens can also pressure companies to use the right technology and avoid conniving with government against the country.
- Citizens should also pressure the government to complete the review of environmental laws.
- Again, it's the citizens who can punish and stop corruption.

Conclusion

- At the moment, Uganda is not any better than other African oil producers where oil production has remained a curse for decades due to corruption and bad politics facilitated by weak civic competence.
- NIGERIA: “did you know that for over 60 years, Nigeria has remained Africa’s biggest oil producer and seventh in the world and yet, today, it is home to the highest number of POOREST citizens on earth. UNEP estimates that Nigeria requires over \$40 billion for her environmental clean up.
- Only empowered CITIZENS and not government’s good speeches can save Uganda from Africa’s oil curse.

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