

A Water and Environment Media Network Publication

# Eco-Guardian

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## Who owns land in forests?

Protected areas are being parceled out to rich individuals who have acquired titles contrary to the law.





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## editor's word

Welcome to the maiden edition of the *Eco-Guardian*. The *Eco-Guardian* is a brainchild of Water and Environment Media Network –Uganda (WEMNET-U) with support from partners seeking to highlight issues affecting the environment.

This magazine provides an independent platform to promote environmental awareness, highlight various environmental abuses and demand for accountability and good governance. It brings you what is happening in the forest sector, through exposing the misconduct within the forestry and environmental sector.

The *Eco-Guardian* will be a platform where journalists freely express themselves unlike in the mainstream traditional media where some issues may not easily be published due to the different reasons.

About a decade ago, there were reforms in the forestry sector, which showed a lot of promise; for instance the National Forestry Authority (NFA) was born, District Forestry Services (DFS) and Forest Sector Support Department (FSSD) were also created. Surprisingly, forest destruction continues to be on the rise. What is the problem?

Without convincing reasons licenses for timber cutting continue to be issued out through questionable channels. The President was forced to impose a ban on land allocation for tree planting in forest reserves because of unclear circumstances of how they were being giving out.

All these point to one issue that if there was accountability, tree farming would not be a problem, and communities would play its role in policing its forests and you would see reduction in encroachment and deforestation. But because the centre cannot hold, things are falling apart.

We as WEMNET are going to use *Eco-Guardian* as one of the platforms to create increased awareness of issues in the sector. We will rely on our strength of having a team that is passionate about environment issues in the media to pursue this cause. We will link up with institutions with the mandate to promote the conservation of nature in order to restore the degraded forests.

Happy reading.



## Government to militarise NFA to save forests

The move comes at the back of increased deforestation where the country loses about 92,000 hectares of its forest cover annually.

BY SIMON MUSASIZI

Government is considering militarizing the National Forestry Authority (NFA), in the move to enhance protection of forest resources.

Once implemented, the NFA force will become the country's fifth, joining the Uganda People's Defense Forces (UPDF), Uganda Police Force (UPF), Uganda Prisons Service (UPS) and Uganda Wildlife Authority (UWA).

"We have discussed with the commander of the UPDF to come up with the same arrangement like that of UWA," said Mr. Michael Mugisa.

NFA Executive Director, Michael Mugisa said at an interface meeting held in November 2014 dialogue organised by Care International in Uganda in partnership with Anti Corruption Coalition Uganda where sector players interfaced with NFA and the Ministry of Water and Environment's Forestry Sector Support Department (FSSD) in Kampala.

He made the revelation while responding to sector players who questioned the role of the UPDF in the forests, claiming they (UPDF officer) were instead conniving with illegal timber dealers.

"The army stationed at Kagora Central Forest Reserve (CFR) has become a liability to NFA. On October 31, 2014, they threatened the community who had reported to them illegalities happening in the forest reserve," said Sam Nya-

kojo, the Project Coordinator in charge of Forest Governance at the Kyenjojo based Joint Effort to Save Environment (JESE).

The Speaker sought to understand "Who commands and supervises these soldiers who are just picked from the barracks? And how can a civilian command a soldier?" he wondered.

Currently, NFA has 38 UPDF soldiers attached to it, and according to Mugisa, they take orders from him.

"It is not a big army to command," Mugisa responded.

"The function of the army is to give us protection during our operations. They are supposed to stand there and watch. In case there is violence, they come in." In his opinion, Mugisa thinks the Police is inefficient because "they are cowards." He adds that, "they may even fear to shoot someone. You have seen policemen being slapped with a gun in their hands. UPDF is feared. Even when you are walking with them in the forest, you can see they are trained to fight," he observed.

But with increasing voices questioning their role in a national and non-military organisation, Mugisa revealed that they are considering streamlining UPDF's role so that NFA functions like UWA, which is counted as the fourth force.

UWA has its staff armed, with a UPDF Colonel assisted by a Major in-charge of law enforcement and all the soldiers attached to UWA. The militarisation of NFA comes at the back of increased deforestation where the country loses

about 92,000 hectares of its forest cover annually, with many of these loses happening in protected forest reserves.

NFA, for example, has over the years lost 192 central forest reserves due to encroachment. Among them is Luziba (670 hectares), Kasolo (3,244 hectares) and Muinaina (1,067 hectares), all in Kasambya Sub County in Mubende district, which were encroached on by people calling themselves veterans.

Some of these encroachers are armed, which has in the past forced some environmentalists to advocate for the arming of the authority so that the forests become a no-go area like national parks. Environmentalists advocated for the creation of environmental police.

150 police officers were allocated to this unit but, only 38 are attached to NFA to supervise 506 central forest reserves.

But still, if NFA has got a Law Enforcement Unit, a surveillance team, which they created, Environment Police, why should it have UPDF in forest enforcement? Have these structures failed to be effective? What is the implication of multiple enforcement agencies? That of course would turn NFA into an institution similar to Uganda Wildlife Authority, where parks are no go area for people unless authorized.

"We want to assess because in forestry, there is flexibility. People depend on forests for firewood, water and timber," Mugisa also acknowledges, adding: "Forestry still has a low level of conservation compared to national parks... (although) it has become a problem; people who go into forests are armed, they have even killed our patrol men."



# Wetland destruction costs Uganda Shs2 billion annually

BY EPHRAIM KASOZI

Limitations with the existing laws that govern the management of wetlands are the major cause of the high rate of wetland encroachment and degradation, which is threatening environment disaster in the country.

Wetlands help to store and regulate water flow, because they act like sponges first soaking up water during heavy rains, stopping it from flowing to low areas.

They help to filter and clean the water once it is held long enough, and in so doing to ensure that fisheries and other life can survive with clean water.

However, The Director for Environment at the Ministry of Water and Environment Pual Mafabisay that the state of wetlands is worrying given that Uganda has lost about 30 per cent of its wetlands over the last 15 years.

A quick observation in most parts of the country indicates that wetlands are turned into urban areas for settlement. In other areas, there are in-

creased agricultural activities in wetlands.

The destruction has led to the contamination of water resources, which is partly caused by reduced buffering capacity of open water bodies.

Mr Paul Mafabi, the Director of Environment says: "There is lack of a strong law in the country to protect wetlands but the government has put in place the policy which was adopted 20 years ago to protect wetlands in addition to sensitisation of people."

He says that lack of strong law leads to impunity among people to reclaim wetlands, causing



Wetland destruction compromises the quality of water. WEMNET-U PHOTO

waters for example in Lake Kyoga and other-slakes and rivers to dry up, which affect food production.

"There is a negative attitude by the public towards the Wetlands because many people with full knowledge of the law go ahead and acquire land titles in wetlands. In some areas, they are built up making it difficult for us to access the wetlands," Mr Mafabi says.

He argues that wetlands contribute to rain formation and fish production.

State Minister for Environment Ms Flavia Munaaba attributes the high rate of wetland encroachment and destruction to corruption within and outside the environment sector.

According to the Minister, the lack of awareness of the environment within the legal sector has also threatened the state of wetlands in the country.

"The environment sector claims to be getting a small portion of funds making it difficult for them to carry out enforcement activities. This, they claim, is the reason why a number of wetlands have been degraded or reclaimed for industrial and commercial purposes. Court orders also hinder the authority during the process of evicting wetland encroachers while keeping the status quo and during this period people destroy more," says Ms Munaaba.

She adds that lack of awareness and understanding of the functions of wetlands and the effects of their (wetlands) depletion by the community has also negatively affected the wetlands.

Ms Munaaba says: "The government is planning to publish a Wetland Atlas to inform people about the state of wetlands from the past years to the present and also educate them on the dangers of destructing wetlands and how to protect them."

She warns that the current rate of wetland degradation poses a looming desertification in the country due to water shortage as well as pollution which increases the cost of treating water and impact on the underground water reserves. She says if it persists, wetland degradation would cause to global warming.

Wetlands destruction costs Uganda nearly Shs2 billion per year and contamination of water resources, which is partly caused by reduced buffering capacity of open water bodies costs Uganda nearly Shs38billion annually.

"God made room for wetlands and lakes to exist so that we can get fish, water, papyrus and other material to feed on but the poor use of wetlands also dries up water streams and wells and also disrupt rainfall patterns," says Ms Munaaba.

## How reclamation is affecting water, food

Millions of people directly depend on wetlands for water. Wetlands store fresh water and recharge aquifers, which are important ground water sources for domestic and industrial purposes. Most of these benefits accumulate largely to the rural communities and are essential in sustaining livelihoods.

However, the destruction of wetlands has caused shortage of water supply to the communities that are not adequately supplied with piped water, which hinders the growth and development of their work. This is caused through drying up of streams and wells which are water catchments in or for wetlands.

The destruction also compromises on the quality of water where wetlands help in the purification and cleaning of water. This has raised the cost of purifying water and duplicated underground water reserves causing poor quality and infected water which negatively affect human life, animals and plants.

The contaminated water cause diseases which include among others cholera, typhoid fever, Bilhazia and in people which is a threat to the country's health sector in terms of increasing the costs on medicine and high death rate.

Wetlands help in the formation of rainfall which when reclaimed disrupt rain patterns leading to inadequate rains and water in the country. And the inadequate or lack of rainfall affect food production which hence high food prices and poverty in the country.

They help to control floods through reserving heavy rain water which would flood into people's property and destroys them and even the lives of people. Therefore people suffer from floods due to reclamation of wetlands which act as water reservoirs.

# Church in forest land grab saga

BY SIMON MUSASIZI

The Catholic Church came under scrutiny in the year 2014 for allegedly acquiring 220.0230 hectares (about 550.0575 acres) of land in a Central Forest Reserve under questionable circumstances.

Documents obtained by *Eco Guardian* indicate how the “Registered Trustees of the Catholic Diocese of Fort Portal” acquired block 151, plot 5, Kakole [village] in Rwaibale zone, Butunduzi Town Council, Kyenjojo District.

The certificate of title of the land, which is located inside Matiri Central Forest Reserve (CFR), is dated March 14, 2014.

According to the sketch map, this land is located between River Kazizi and River Kahombo, which according to Robert Owinyi, the Acting Range Manager of Muzizi Range, where Matiri CFR falls, places it inside the forest reserve.

“The River Kazizi I know starts, flows and stops in Matiri CFR. And Kahombo forms a boundary between Matiri and Ibambaro central forest reserves. On either side, you have forest reserves,” Owinyi said.

“Kakole is an illegal creation. Administratively, it has never existed in Kyenjojo district. I crosschecked with the district authorities whether there is a village, parish or sub-county known as Kakole and they told me it is not there.”

Owinyi argues that Kakole is of one of the four compartments of Matiri CFR, specifically compartment M2.

But the name was created by groups of encroachers led by Patrick Karubanga.

“After they were removed from the forest land by NFA and police, the encroachers filed an application in the High Court in Fort Portal for a temporary injunction against NFA, but on July 25, 2014, court dismissed it on grounds that their activities were dangerous to the forest and are causing irreparable damage to National Development Authority and all citizens of Uganda,” Owinyi says.

“It is the same piece of land in the same ‘illegal’ village (Kakole) that the Catholic Diocese has secured a certificate of title.”

## LAND QUERIES

How the church acquired the said land title is the question we wanted to put to the Catholic Diocese of Fort Portal Board

of Trustees chairman, Bishop Robert Muhirwa, when we visited him on July 31, 2014, at his office.

But the bishop declined to comment on the issue. He instead spoke to only the person who had coordinated the meeting.

In the meeting, also attended by Fr. George Ahairwe, the treasurer of the diocese, Bishop Muhirwa reportedly said they had a temporary licence, which they acquired in 1923, before moving to build Rwaibale Catholic Church in the area.

Bishop Muhirwa said all the cartography maps in Entebbe show the land is under the Roman Catholic Mission.

“We are only renewing its lease,” he said.

On July 19, 2012, “the registered trustees of the Catholic Diocese of Fort Portal” applied for conversion of this piece of land from customary tenure to freehold tenure.

A copy of the application letter, a copy of which *Eco Guardian* obtained, states that they intend to use the land for farming, setting up a school and a hospital. Surprisingly, however, the application does not state the current use of the land, for example, that it has a church.

Also, National Forestry Authority (NFA) does not feature among the names of owners of the adjacent land.

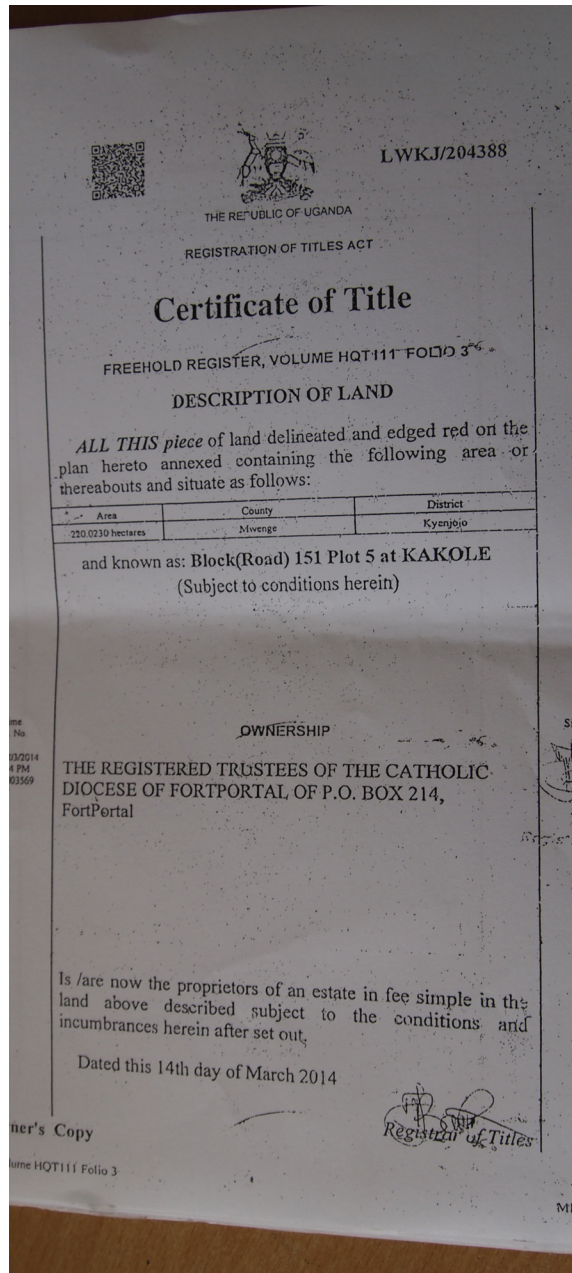
Sections 6(2) and 12(1) of the Land Act demand that the area land committee, which does inspections and makes recommendations to the district land board for issuing of land titles, notifies persons of the adjacent land which may be affected by the application.

The adjacent owners listed include Aloyzious Kyarigonza and Bataka Kweranaho Group, which is headed by Omuhereza Rwakaboyo. The latter, who has been an illegal occupant of part of the forest reserve land, was on July 25, 2014, ordered by the High Court to vacate the said land.

“There is no way NFA cannot be a signatory because we are the biggest neighbours,” says Owinyi.

The church’s application was approved on April 3, 2013 by the District Land Board chairman, Rev Fr Leo Baryabuuza, apparently without notification of the NFA.

The approval was preceded by an inspection report by the Butunduzi Town



The land title acquired by the Catholic Diocese of Fort Portal in a forest reserve. WEMNET-U PHOTO



A large chunk of the forest has been depleted for timber. WEMNET-U PHOTO

Council area land committee, which recommended that no land dispute was found.

The recommendation letter, dated March 25, 2013 and signed by four committee members, estimates the size of the land to be 244 acres – far less than the 550.0575 acres that the church eventually acquired.

“It comes as a surprise that we are seeing a land title coming up without our consent in any corresponding consultations or participation of NFA. I need to state categorically that NFA is not party to this process,” says NFA Spokesperson Gilbert Kadilo.

Kadilo noted that there is a well laid out process of degazetting a forest reserve, which were not followed.

“That process involves degazetting, which includes a justification as to why the land usage has to change, and that has to go through parliament. It is not just waking up and degazetting. Also, ordinarily when a CFR is degazetted there is usually a request for an exchange where if a part is degazetted, an equal amount of land is provided elsewhere for the establishment of the forest reserve,” Kadilo says.

“As we follow up this issue, we want to give the church a benefit of doubt that their title is outside the forest reserve. Otherwise, if it is established that this title is found inside the forest reserve, the parties that participated in the process should be able to explain to us how it happened. And we will

demand that it is canceled.”

## LAND BOARD UNAWARE

When contacted, the District Land Board chairman, Rev Fr Leo Baryabuuza, however, claimed he was not aware of the controversial land title.

“It does not ring in my mind that I have ever seen a file by the Catholic Church. I am surprised that there is a land title in a forest reserve,” Fr Baryabuuza said.

On whether the application letter he signed on April 3, 2013 should be treated as null and void, Baryabuuza said he could not nullify it until after checking his files to be sure.

Fr Baryabuuza, who took over leadership of the land board in 2012, says the board sits three times a year, and for every sitting, they handle about 60 files/applications.

He, however, noted that they are not mandated to handle applications for land exceeding 400 acres.

Peter Walubiri, a lawyer knowledgeable with land affairs, described it as an “illegality”.

“How can government issue a land title in a forest reserve before degazetting it? I don’t think that title can stand scrutiny, merely because you have got a title, because the law is very clear, if it’s a forest reserve, you can’t make any grants of any land there until you degazette the land. Without degazetting, the title is illegal and a court of law can order its cancellation,” he says.

“The [district land] board can claim ignorance but once it comes to their knowledge that they made a mistake, they should own up and take proceedings to have the title canceled.”

## CAUSES OF ENCROACHMENT IN MIZIZI RANGE.

The encroachment, according to Owinyi, was fuelled by an interim court injunction that prohibited NFA from evicting a group of encroachers who had sued the forest body.

“That injunction stopped NFA from interfering with the activities of the encroachers. So, it left them free to do anything,” says Owinyi.

The interim order was lifted on July 25, 2014 by Justice David Batema, who ordered both parties to vacate the forest reserve.

Matiri, which measures 5,431 hectares, was first gazetted in 1948 as a local forest reserve. It became a central forest reserve in 1968.

The forest has an enclave owned by two people who refused to be compensated at the time it was gazetted. It is that enclave, according to Owinyi, which acts as a springboard for encroachment.

Owinyi said more than 1,800 hectares had been encroached upon by April last year.

On June 2, the Catholic Church wrote to the commissioner for surveys and mapping in the lands ministry, requesting for a government surveyor to open up boundaries of the land.

# Who owns land in forests?

BY ECO-GUARDIAN REPORTER

If there is any place that is vulnerable to attack from land grabbers it should be the land reserved for protected areas particularly forests and wetlands. It has emerged that individuals who are highly connected have acquired land titles in some of Uganda's protected areas.

The forest reserves such as Kajjansi and Nonve in Wakiso district could only be existing on paper

as forest reserves. The protected areas are being parceled out to rich individuals who have acquired title something that is contrary to the law.

"It is not acceptable to take land under forest reserves," said Gilbert Kadilo, the Public Relations Manager at the National Forestry Authority (NFA). "We are going to challenge all this because it is illegal to hold land titles under forest reserves."

In some areas, private sector players including estate developers, large scale agricultural enterprises like Kakira Sugar Works and Sugar Corpora-

tion of Uganda Limited, Lugazi are either proposing to take over protected areas or have taken over parts of the reserves.

The high profile people have come to the protected areas alone.

The local people together with immigrants from south western Uganda (Bakiga), Busoga and Banyarwanda have also invaded parts of the forest reserves, according to Jolly Kanyesige, a forest supervisor-Kasana-Kasambya forest sector under NFA in Mubende.

## PEOPLE AND COMPANIES HOLDING TITLES IN CENTRAL RESERVES

Owner	Plot No	Block Number	Volume	Folio No	Registration Date	Remarks
Hudson Mukasa Kijooma Andrew, Kakembo Nathan and Ngobi Abubakar	336	Busiro 447	Freehold Register Volume No.1407	19	5th June 2013	Land at Bufulu, Nkumba, Katabi File LB/10375 CFR
Muwonge Moses Rodey	331	Busiro 447	Free hold Register volume No. 1406	15	31st May 2013	Land at Katabi file LB/10363 Kyewaga CFR
Nakajja Denis	266	Busiro 447	Free hold register volume No. 1342	7	28th Dec 2012	Land at Kitinda Village File LB/10273 Kyewaga CFR
Odek Chris, Namanya Joy, Taaka Agness & Naluyimba Gladys	321	Busiro 1407	Free hold register volume No. 1407	17	4th June 2013	Land at Bufulu, Nkumba, Katabi file LB/10367 Kyewaga CFM
The Pearl Gardens Ltd	35	Sseso 52	Leasehold register volume No. 4331		15th May 2012	Land at Lutoboka, Kalangala Lutoboka CFR
Nabbanja Victor, Annet Babirye & Mudde Ibrahim	1353	Busiro 405-441	Free hold register Volume No. 1360	4	11th May 2013	Land at Katala file FRV. 1334/10 Kajansi CFR
Mukasa Hudson, Baliruno John, Kijooma Andrew, Tayebwa, Gilbert & Eva Ndagire	1056	Busiro 439-441	Free hold register volume No. 1407	22	2013	Land at Katabi file LB/10376 Kyewaga CFR
Moses Ndege Bbosa	143	Kyadondo 242	Free hold register volume No. 463	21	6th Aug. 2007	Land at Wakiso Kyadondo
Nabbosa Majorie & Nantumbwe Justine	282	Busiro 447	Free hold volume No. 1285	2	19th Oct 2012	Land at Kitinda file LB/10221 Kyewaga CFR
Turyahembwa Jonas	281	Busiro 447	Free hold register volume No. 1285	4	13th July 2012	Land at kitinda LB/10141 Kyewaga CFR
Werihe Kafabusa Micheal	227	Kyaggwe 113	Lease hold register volume No. 4393	10	15th Oct. 2012	Land at Namanve file ULC/154/458 Namanve CFR
East Africa Heavy Machinery LTD	675	Kyadondo 242	Lease hold register volume No. 34199	19	2011	Land at Kirinya file ULC/154/1398 Namanve CFR
Ruth Namuluta	3	Buvuma 37	Free hold register volume No. 1363	5	10th Sept 2013	Land at Buvuma file MNK/0960 Buvuma Island
Kakembo Nathan, Babirye Kimbarly, Nalubege Hsafa & Kasozi Kitaka	285	Busiro 447	Free hold register volume No. 1334	12	20th Dec 2012	Land at Nkumba parish file No. LB/10244 Kyewaga CFR
Mbazira Godfrey & Lumala Mulumba	324	Busiro 447	Free hold register volume No. 1406	19	31st May 2013	Land at Katabi file LB/10366 Kyewaga CFR
Nampewo Lillian Winnie	598	Kyadondo 242	Free hold register volume No. 790		30th Aug. 2010	Land at Sebagabo Kirinya 47780 Namanve CFR
Kalemire Frank	796	Kyadondo 242	Free hold register volume No. 966	20	13th July 2011	Land at Bukasa file 3900 Namanve CFR
Kitanywa James	761	Kyadondo 242	Free hold register Volume No. 952	5	27th June 2011	Land at Kirinya file BL/9915 Namanve CFR
Mash Investments Ltd	555	Kyagwe 133	Free hold register volume No.4369	25	13th July 2012	Land at Namanve file ULC/ 154/1668 Nmanve CFR

Owner	Plot No	Block Number	Volume	Folio No.	Registration Date	Remarks
Ssemwogerere Hussein	287	Busiro 447	Free hold register volume No. 1332	9	18th Dec 2012	Land at Bufulu Mugomba CFR
C&G Andijes group Ltd	742	Kyadondo 242	Free hold register volume No. 1382	23	3rd April 2013	Land at Kirinya Bukasa file LB/10321 Namanve CFR
Tayaewa Gilbert	286	Busiro 447	Free hold register volume No. 1332	7	24th Dec 2012	Land at Nkumba file No. WAK/0018/11/01
Bogere Robert	323	Busiro 447	Free hold register volume No. 1406	16		Land at Katabi file No. LB/10373
Namiro Sarah	288	Busiro 447	Free hold register volume No. 1332	8	24th Dec 2013	Land at Bufulu file No. WAK/0009/11/01
Nakibuka Justine	291	Busiro 447	Free hold register volume No. 1326	10	13th Dec 2012	Land at Nkumba Bufulu file No. LB/10253 Kyewaga CFR
Itwala Joshua	289	Busiro 447	Free hold register Volume No. 1326	12	13th Dec 2012	Land at Nkumba/Bufulu file No. LB/10252 Mugomba
Ngobi Abubakar	292	Busiro 447	Free hold register volume No.1334	9	20th Dec 2012	Land at Lwakia zone Wakiso file No. LB/10251 Mugomba CFR
Joan Mbabazi	294	Busiro 447	Free hold register volume No. 1129	19	13th Dec 2012	Land at Nkumba Bufulu file No. LB/10251 Mugomba CFR
Hudson Mukasa, John Buliruno and Denis Kasoma	248	Busiro 447	Free hold register volume No. 1129	19	2012	Land at Kitinda file No. FRV/965/8 Kyewaga
Namutebi Milly	264	Busiro 447	Free hold register volume No. 1332	18	18th Dec 2012	Land at Kitinda file No. LB/1075 Kyewaga
Nakayaga Shamia	265	Busiro 447	Free hold register volume No. 1332	10	2012	Land at Kitinda file No. LB/10205 Kyewaga CFR
Nakajja Denis	226	Busiro 447	Free hold register volume No. 1342	7	28th Dec 2012	Land at Kitinda file LB/18273 Kyewaga CFR
M/S Arise Africa International	19	Bunya Block 15	LRV 3064	7	15yrs from June 2002	Bukaleba CFR Iganga District Land Board.
M/S Bahesco Ltd (Hajji Abdunoor Kayiga)					Approx. 205.0ha 49yrs from July '80	Budongo CFR lessor: Uganda Land Commission
Ochieng family lessee: Lucy, Grace, Fred and Lorda Ochieng lease term:		Budomero, Bulange, Busiki	LRV 1093	24	Approx. 449.4ha 49yrs from 1st July 1880	Budunda Bugaali CFR lessor: ULC
Evarest Mugerwa Kafeero	11	Buddu Block 783	LRV 1370 Folio 19		Approx. 98.71 ha 49 yrs from 1st June 1984	Gyanta, Kitunga, Kyanamukaaka Masaka. lessor-ULC Located with in Mujuzi CFR
Emmanuel Nyirinkindi	9	Kikandwa Estate	LRV 1644LVR 1644folio 6 Mubende		Approx. 404.4HA Lease term: 44yrs from 1st Dec 1985	Lessor:ULC Namwasa CFR.
Kidega Jude Clement P.O. Box 27520 Kampala	85	Kyaggwe at Ssayi	Instr; MKO-00005019	561	Area 40.43 hectares dated 4th Feb 2014	Zirimiti CFR lessor. Mukono district land Board
Nasozzi Deborah	80	Kyaggwe at Ssayi	Instr. MKO-00005014	561	Area 125.58 hectares dated 4th Feb 2014	Zirimiti CFR lessor. Mukono district land Board
Kyeswa Geoffrey of P.O.Box 273 Mukono	76	Kyaggwe at Ssayi	MK045Folio 15MKO-00005415	561	Area 242.8500 hectares dated 4th Feb 2014	Zirimiti CFR lessor. Mukono district land Board
Napio Sarah Magola & Nagola Besweri Kalyebbi c/o P.O.Box 7096 Kampala	75	Kyaggwe at Ssayi	MK035 FOLIO 5 Instr. MKO 00005022	561	Area 24.24 hectares dated 4th Feb 2014	Zirimiti CFR lessor. Mukono district land Board
Ayero Susan of P.O.BOX 27520 Kampala	74	Kyaggwe at Ssayi	MK0-39 FOLIO 7 Instr. 00005020	561	Area 93.000 hectares dated 4th Feb 2014	Zirimiti CFR lessor. Mukono district land Board
Mulkin Enterprises Ltd Entebbe Wakiso-Kitubulu	6	Miria Close	LRV 2916	7	Area Approx. 0.110 ha lease term 5yrs from 1st Jan 1998 extendable to 49 years	CFR lessor. Mpigi district Land Board
MEGHA INDUSTRIES (U) LTD LOT IN WAKISO LESSEE: MEGHA INDUSTRIES (U) LTD	13-17	KIBIRA RD. ENTEBBE MUNICIPALITY	LRV 3079	13	Area: 0.458 Ha lease term 7 years from Jan 2001	KITUBULU CFR LESSOR MPIGI DISTRICT LAND BOARD
SANGO BAY ESTATES LTD			LRV 149	22	Area approximately 146.000 acres lease term 99 years from 1st march 1936	SANGO BAY CRF LESSOR ULC

PEOPLE AND COMPANIES HOLDING TITLES IN CENTRAL RESERVES

Owner	Plot No	Block Number	Volume	Folio No.	Registration Date	Remarks
Deborah Mbabazi -Entebbe Wakiso	18	Katonga Rd. Entebbe Wakiso	LRV 3464	8	Area Approx. 0.094 Ha Lease Term 10 Yrs From 1st Jan 2001	Kitubulu CFR LESSOR Wakiso District Land Board
Megha Industries (U) LTD Entebbe Wakiso	11	Kibira Rd Entebbe Wakiso	LRV 3079	6	Area Approx 0383 Ha Lease Term 7yrs From Jan. 2001 Extendable To 44 Yrs	Kitubulu CFR LESSOR Wakiso District Land Board
David Hood Mpigi	7&8	Miraz Close	LRV 3160	20	Area Approx.. 0.193ha Lease Term 19yrs From 1st Jan. 2001	Kitubulu CFR LESSOR Wakiso District Land Board
Erifazi Bumbo Rwakaika Kikwanama, Rukondwa Bwijanga Masindi	51	Bujenje Block 10	LRV 2082	2	91.2ha Lease Term 5 Yrs From 1st Nov 1992	Fumbya CFR lessor ULC
Henry Dumba Seryima	58	Singo Block 720			42.7 Ha Lease Term 5 Yr From 1st Feb 1997	ULC
Kiviri- Kabidula Kiboga						
Charles Mawenu-Kabaale, Wabikoko, Mpigi		Busiro Block 439	LRV2412	2	Area 73.66 Acres Lease Term 5 Yrs from 1/5/95	ULC
Albert Mpanju Irumba- Mparo Bunyoro	9	Bugahya Block	LRV 824	11	Area Approx. 72.5 Ha Lease 5yrs From 1970 Extendable	ULC
Yusuf Kagumire, Eliab Muhozi & Dr. Yusuf Mpairwe	1	Bulongo Block 158	LRV1039	16	Area 905.1 Ha Lease 5 Yrs From 1/12/78	ULC
Augustino Bazira, Kibindula- Kiboga district	60	Singo Block 720	LRV 2455	13	Area: 150 Ha Lease Term 49 Yrs from 1/2/96	Luwunga CFR LESSOR ULC
Jesse Kyomya Ndahura, Ndahura Catherine, Paul Ndahura, Cyprian Rogers Ndahura & Jessee Ndahura	6	Bugahya Block 19	LRV 934	9	Area: 1295 Ha 49 Yrs From 1/7/ 1976	Kahuru Kobwire CFR Lessor ULC
Entebbe Resort Beach ltd	6&8	Busiro Block 447	LRV 2269	5	Area 33.61 Acres For 49 Yrs From 1/3/2010	Kywaga CFR Lessor ULC
Fiduga Ltd	103&104	Mawokota Block 112-127	LRV 2771	21	Area: 17.96 Ha 44 Yr From 1997	Lwamunda CFR – Mpigi District Land Board
Erisa Olet Dickson	4	Kyadondo Spring Close	FRV 778	5	Area:0.170 Ha Exercised Original Plot 20-40	Nakawa CFR previously ULC but now free hold



# ‘Over 10,000 hectares of central forest reserves destroyed’ – report

EPHRAIM KASOZI

The unchecked destruction of forest reserves has claimed at least 10,252 hectares of a central forest reserve in Kibaale District, a situation that is worsening the ongoing dispute over ownership of forest cover.

The forest land in Kagadi sector reserve comprising of the area where court recently directed forest authorities to expeditiously open the boundaries have been turned into cultivation farms, settlements and timber harvesting.

The report on the status of the forest reserves in Kagadi Sector that was presented to Conservation stakeholders in Kibaale district indicates that the 16 Central Forest Reserves (CFRs) in five management beats of Kakumiro, Kagombe, Nyakarongo, Kyebando and Kiryanga have been degraded up to 40 percent.

“...Approximately 10,252.233 hectares of forest reserve areas are heavily degraded due to massive agricultural encroachment, settlement and timber harvesting by immigrants and local communities,” reads the report that suggests the restoration of the integrity of degraded CFRs to enhance effective supply ecological, aesthetic, social and economic values of society.

The rampant encroachment on the forest reserves is attributed to protracted court cases, boundary disputes and systematic boundary encroachment which is mostly affecting Kagombe, Nakunyazo, Guramwa, Rukara, Nyabiku, Kanaga and Razaire CFRs.

Other challenges include inadequate fuel allocations, lack for equipment to collect evidence, lean facilitation as well as lack of commitment and adherence to the core values of National Forest Authority (NFA) by some field

staff.

A separate situational report dated July 9, 2014 from Hoima District shows that 200 hectares is under cultivation while another 30 hectares are under sugarcane plantation for out growers.

Another report on the encroachment status in CFRs in Muzizi River Range indicates that part of Itwara sector, comprising of nine forest reserves in Kabarole, Kyenjojo and Bundibugyo is facing encroachment through cultivation, illegal timber harvesting and construction of permanent houses.

The report indicates that 58 percent of Kabongo-Muntandi CFR in Bundibugyo is heavily encroached with permanent houses and cultivation while 246 hectares have since been curved out of Bundikeki CFR which measured 396.

It is reported that the 65 hectares of Fort Portal CFR in Kabarole District have since been encroached on 100 percent due to urban development.

The report shows that about 21980.1 hectares out of 109,858 hectares of Matiri Sector have been encroached on since 2005.

The report shows that 100 percent of Lusiba CFR, Kasolo CFR and Muinaina CFR in Mubende District have been heavily encroached on with temporary houses, cultivation, markets, schools and health centers established.

Other CFRs heavily encroached on include Kanangalo (50%), Kajonde in Mityana (67.3%), Kasa in Mityana (62%), Mukambwe – Mityana (85%), Musamya-Mityana (65%) and Walugondo- Mityana at 75% encroachment.

Local leadership attribute the rampant felling down of trees resulting into illegal timber dealings and charcoal burning to misuse of permits, impunity and connivance coupled with bribery.



# Boundary opening: Shs19bn costing Uganda forests



BY SIMON MUSASIZI

When the local leadership of Kiyuni Sub County, Mubende District recently convened an urgent meeting at Kanyago Village to address the issue of increasing destruction of Mpumudde Central Forest Reserve (CFR), everyone expected tempers to roar.

But in a surprising twist, the village residents, who are suspected to be the perpetrators of the encroachment, instead expressed willingness to vacate the forest reserve if only NFA showed them the boundaries of the forest.

"Show us where the boundary is and we will not cross that line," said Yubu Musekuro, one of the residents.

"We are yet to open the boundary, but for now, let us take river line as our boundary," responded Peter Egesa, the NFA forest supervisor for Kasana-Kasambya area where Mpumudde CFR is comprised.

In a separate meeting with the LCIII Chairman Polly Sserumaga Bazadde and journalists, Egesa had earlier revealed that their biggest challenge in protecting the forests is the issue of lack of boundary markings on the forest reserves.

"We are not sure of the boundaries," he said.

"You can arrest someone and they tell you they are outside the forest."

Unclear boundaries are one of the biggest factors leading to increased loss of forest cover. Uganda loses about 92,000 hectares of its forest cover annually and interestingly, many of these losses are happening in protected forest reserves.

NFA has over the years lost 192 central forest reserves due to encroachment. Among them is Luziba (670 hectares), Kasolo (3,244 hectares) and Muinaina (1,067 hectares), all in Kasambya Sub County in Mubende District, which were encroached on by people disguising as veterans.

According to Robert Owinyi, the Acting Ranger Manager in charge of Muzizi Range (which covers the districts of Mubende, Kyegegwa, Kyenjonjo, Bundibugyo, Ntoroko and Kabarole among others), boundaries for the above three forest reserves are not open.

"It is a no go area to NFA staff. Markets, schools and health centres now dot the former forest reserves," he says.

As a result, the number of forest reserves under NFA supervision has dropped down from 698 to 506. But even of the 506, of which 313 are reported to be partly encroached on.

In Kagora CFR, for example, the side neighboring Katooke Sub County in Kyenjonjo, farmers have encroached on more than 100 hectares of the forest. Hillsides that were once blanketed by tropical forest are now covered with cassava, maize and beans. There are only a few stable patches of forest remaining –with cultivation taking its stall deep inside the forest.

For Itwara CFR, on the part adjacent to the villages in Kigoyera and Katambale parishes in Kyarusozzi Sub County, Kyenjonjo District, the situation is worsened by the fact that the reserve is neighbored by a private forest reserve owned by Mukwano Group of companies.

There is no clear boundary separating the two forest reserves –with just a valley, which the community here takes as the boundary.

According to Peter Kakuru, the chairperson of Kajuma-Itwara Farmers and Environmental Conservation Association (KIFECA), Mukwano has licensed people to cut trees in his forest reserve but these people are abusing their license by cutting trees in Itwara CFR as well.

"They put their cutting beds in the valley and keep felling trees from either sides of the forests," Kakuru says.

Kakuru's association has a collaborative forest management agreement with NFA to jointly manage the forest. He alleges that

they have made several reports to NFA but 'the illegal loggers just pay off NFA staff and continue with their activities.'

In Mpinve CFR in Butoloogo Sub County, Mubende District, the issue of boundary demarcation has resulted into increased illegal grazing and cultivation in the forest reserve.

Recently, a Collaborative Forest Management (CFM) was initiated with farmers organized under Butoloogo United Investment Group to try and replant the deforested part, which NFA estimates to be 20% of the forest reserve. However, the arrangement is not progressing well due to conflicts with cattle keepers led by Steven Rutaisire.

Rutaisire claims that he does not know the forest boundary, something which gives him liberty to freely graze his animals in the reserve.

"Let them (NFA) first open the boundaries so that we know where the forest ends –because at one time they were claiming that even our homes are on the forest reserve," says Rutaisire, who owns 100 acres neighbouring the forest reserve.

He says his decision to graze in the forest reserve is because 'even the farmers are not planting trees but growing crops.'

But Emma Hamugisa of the farmers' group says they were allowed by NFA to plant crops as they plant trees. That once they trees grow, they will automatically remove the crops.

An NFA report dated April 15, 2014 to the Muzizi Range Manager, indicates that 'part of the boundary is not clear and therefore calls for re-surveying to be done.'

In Matiri CFR, until the Fort Portal High Court Judge David Batema made a ruling in favour of NFA on July 25, 2014, the forest reserve was under threat after Patrick Karubanga and 40 others, and Omuhereza Rwakaboyo and 119 others in 2009 sued NFA contesting the forest's boundaries and claiming ownership of the forest land neighbouring Mukonomura Enclave.



Matiri, which has a third (about 2,000 hectares) of its total 5,431 hectares encroached on, also faces threat from other encroachers such as the Catholic Diocese of Fort Portal, which was last year reported in the press to have acquired 220.0230 hectares (about 550.0575 acres) in the forest reserve.

According Gilbert Kadilo, NFA's spokesperson, the authority needs Shs21 billion to demarcate all forest reserves in the country.

In the last financial year, NFA was allocated a supplementary budget of Shs2 billion for boundary opening –with priority on 18 CFRs in Mbale, Soroti, Amuria, Kibale, Mubende, Kiboga, Kyankwanzi and Kyenjonjo districts –targeting forests with the highest level of threat.

"There are a total of 506 CFRs under NFA with boundary measuring 14,000km including natural boundaries such as rivers and roads. It costs Shs1.5 million to open boundary for one kilometer, which would require about Shs21 billion on forest boundary opening," Kadilo says.

"We would need an additional Shs19 billion to do the entire boundary opening, which is NFA's total annual budget."

According to the 2005 NFA 'Standards for boundary demarcation', boundary demarcation involves a number of activities, among which is slashing, which is usually carried out to keep the boundary open to ease foot patrols as well as to easily identify forest reserves from other land.

It should be noted that continuous slashing is expensive and unsustainable.

Although it is the easiest way by which to distinguish a boundary, NFA cannot afford it hence the need for more permanent boundary demarcation infrastructures. The infrastructures include: cairns, beacons, trenches, signposts and live-markers like planting trees distinctively different from the surrounding vegetation. Once these are correctly put in place, the cost of boundary maintenance becomes significantly reduced over time.

An NFA official talks to a forest reserve encroacher in Kagadi sector, Kibaale district. The suspected encroacher claims she does not know the boundaries of reserve. WEMNET-U PHOTO



A dried farm that had been planted after destroying part of Matiri Forest in Kyenjojo District. WEMNET-U PHOTO

# Looming food insecurity

BY OUR REPORTER

About 92000 acres of forest land is lost annually through unchecked destruction of green belts through destructive activities.

The major activities include conversion of forest land into cultivation and timber cutting as well as homesteads, a situation which threatens a looming environment disaster affecting food security.

The depletion of forests, which is said to have impact on rain formation where the country leading to inadequate and very heavy rains that affect and destroy the crops and plants grown, now affects food production in most parts of the country.

Agnes Kirabo, the National Coordinator of Food Rights Alliance says that the agricultural sector is over riding other sectors but the farmers are not guided about the proper way to sustainably use forest resources for their farming activities.

"Government bodies are given the authority where it is supposed to enforce the forest laws. But government programmes again encroach on the forests like the palm tree growing project in Kalangala, which replaced the natural forest and also the foiled proposal to replace Mabira, a natural forest with sugar cane plantation," Kirabo laments.

She blames the government programmes for lack of technical knowledge, saying authorities give away wetlands and forests, which help in tropical rain formation that is most received in the country and replaces them with rice plantations in some parts and this affects soil fertility and food production.

"The destruction of forest may lead to less or more rain water, which is destructive, hence, low soil productivity and this would call for technologies to support crops to grow faster. However, this technology is questionable globally because we are going to grow wrong crops and foods and animals which may affect our lives," Kirabo warns.

Kirabo laments that the country lacks an effective agricultural extension system to evaluate and guide on the ways of yielding quality and much products and also proper ways of conserving the environment and soils. She claims that the country's farming and agriculture

are not technically guided, which is a problem to food production.

Ugandans engage in forest products like charcoal, timber and firewood as a source of income, claiming that the move is intended to fight poverty.

According to Prof. Afunaduula-Oweyegha, a retired university lecturer from Makerere, says that soils depreciate in value due to heavy winds that take away the top layers of the soil carrying crop nutrients.

He attributes the rampant deforestation to people's attitudes towards cutting trees for charcoal and timber among other activities to settle their financial problems among themselves.

"We are trying to change the attitudes of the people towards trees because they take them as source of income, which instead degrades the land. The degraded land produces poor quality and quantity of yields, which in turn leads to a shortage of food in stores thereby creating shortage of food," explains Prof Oweyegha, who has since embarked on training people in his village in Nawaka, Luuka District on the value of planting artificial forests using his fourteen acres of land for demonstration.

He says: "I see people cutting down trees for charcoal in my village, claiming to fight poverty but without any authority stopping them. The concerned officers of National Forest Authority (NFA) are city based because they do not come to the ground to prove what exactly is taking place," Prof. Oweyegha laments.

The environment advocate alleges that some of NFA staff involve themselves in timber trade that has made the authority unable to stop the practice.

Prof. Oweyega argues that law enforcement agencies should cooperate and implement the available laws as their mandate to reduce the level of forest encroachment and instead attract people to appreciate forests and utilise them properly.

He also added that the laws should be changed from sectoral to holistic so that they are complete and general without excluding anyone who tries to encroach on the forested land.

"The government should also rethink on the education system by replacing the theoretical forest curriculum with analog forestry.

# as country faces rampant forest depletion



Analog (forestry) does not discriminate planting and preserving of all types of trees and it is people initiative and attracts people to stay closer to forests as their investments," Prof. Oweyegha suggests.

State Minister for Environment, Flavia Munaaba says that the largest percentage of forests are on private land and government is coming up with commercial plantations system to attract people into forestry farming as a move to enhance the conservation of the environment.

She says the arrangement would help to curb the anticipated and rising problem of food insecurity arising from depletion of forests in the country.

"The problem is also one of the biggest causes of environment disasters, which

have attacked different parts of the country claiming lives and property," she says.

Munaaba explains that over 95 percent of the population in the country use charcoal for fuel and these cannot simply be stopped. That is why there has been "the introduction of new cooking technologies of using energy cooking stoves, which we are trying to implement among people to change from using charcoal in order to conserve forests."

She attributes the high encroachment levels to judicial officers who issue interim and temporary orders to block NFA from evicting encroachers from the forest land.

"Temporary orders by courts of law frustrate government agencies' work because while maintaining court orders, encroachers use the gap to deplete the forested areas

during this period. But we have talked to the judiciary and the principle judge has prepared a guideline document to the judicial officers on how to handle forest issues," says the minister.

She laments that corruption has negatively affected the (government) campaign of ensuring the regeneration and conserving of forest reserve; "The people who are paid to protect the available forests are corrupt and sell trees for their individual benefits."

While climatic change is the major effect of forest depletion which threatens looming food insecurity in the country; the demand for fuel is one other issue to consider.

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# The state of Uganda's forests, environment through the lens





Despite efforts by stakeholders to fight for the restoration of central forest reserves, the country loses 92,000 hectares of forest cover every year. WEMNET-U PHOTOS



# Abuse, limited commitment 'killing' the forestry sector - Environmentalist

Despite efforts to conserve the environment by various stakeholders, forests continue to be degraded on account that their boundaries are not defined. Eco-Guardian's EPHRAIM KASOZI spoke seasoned environmentalist, Annet Kandole Balewa about the issues. Below are excerpts.

**Qn. Briefly comment on the current state of the forest sector.**

Ans. In general, the forest sector has the potential to grow if well managed. It is established that the sector employs over 1.2 million people both formal (for those working with forestry) and informal comprising of those dealing in timber and other products.

However, we still see levels of misuse and abuse of resource, and limited commitment from the institutions that are mandated to take care of the forests. On part of law of enforcement, there is lack of a sense of direction:

There is UPDF, the Environmental Protection Police, the law enforcement unit of NFA and the surveillance unit, creates the problem of coherence and coordination.

**Qn. Why is governance becoming a problem in the sector?**

Ans. You cannot isolate the challenges of governance in forestry from those of the country. Lack of transparency, abuse of power and authority are some the governance issues that need to be dealt with at national level. We are glad that there is a willingness of the sector to work with civil society organisations and other players to address this challenge. This is a positive move that will enhance good governance and accountability.

**Qn. What is your take on the ongoing government project to open all forest boundaries?**

Ans. Boundary opening is a positive move if done correctly. It is going to address the biggest problem of encroachment. Encroachment is done in guise of lack of clear boundaries. This is a credit to government.

**Qn. What are the major challenges affecting the forestry sector?**

Ans. The major challenge is streamlining community participation in the management of forest resources. While there are attempts to embrace Community Forest Management (CFM), the initiative is facilitated by external agencies and not by the NFA. Because of this, the issue of monitoring and evaluating the efficiency of CFM is not well grounded and yet if we improve the community participation, the likelihood of increasing benefits to communities would make them to appreciate the role of NFA and the existence of forest resources. Lack of transparency and cases

where no action is taken against NFA staff who are implicated in forest scandals are still major issues that need urgent attention.

**Qn. Any achievements attained?**

Ans. Yes. Some work has been done like in the establishment of tree nurseries to support tree planting. Also, NFA is planting trees in degraded areas. In addition, NFA has granted permits to private sector to do afforestation in degraded areas. This critical role of involving the private sector in the regeneration of forests is a positive development as well.

**Qn. Is there anything that you would like the public know?**

Ans. The public should know that deforestation is the biggest contributor to climate change. We will not talk of food and water security if we cannot invest in managing forest resources in our respective areas. We want to see more evictions and let the forests be free. We want to see the community benefiting from forest programmes like the award of tree planting permits that in my opinion should be given to individuals and communities adjacent to Central forest reserves. We want to see affirmative action taken on award of permits.

Ms Kandole says there is a lack of coherence and coordination among the UPDF, Environmental Protection Police, the law enforcement unit of NFA and the surveillance unit in the fight to save forests. WEMNET-U PHOTO





# Trees paying the first price for oil

## BY OUR REPORTER

**“All that glitters is not gold”** is a well-known saying, meaning that not everything that looks precious or true turns out to be so. This can apply to Uganda’s oil, which was discovered recently. Oil is like a double edged sword that could make or break Uganda.

For decades, the districts (Hoima and Buliisa) sitting at the heart of the oil region were forgotten, but recent activities show that the region is waking up to a big change. The construction of an electric power line from Masindi to Hoima is much talked about as something that is going to help chase darkness from this remotest part of the world. But it is not without blemish.

“Budongo is paying the price for construction of the power line,” said Moses Kabireho, the sector Manager for Budongo, which covers parts of Buliisa, Masindi and Hoima.

He said a strip has been cut through the forest to pave way for construction of the power lines meaning that trees have to be cut down

Budongo is a rich ecological system, which about 400 chimpanzees call home and globally endangered birds including Nahan’s Francolin call home.

### High demand for charcoal, firewood

In addition, people hoping to catch the windfalls of petro dollars from other parts of the country and neighbouring countries are flocking to the oil region. The region, which was sparsely populated, is increasingly becoming over populated. This, according to Moses is increasing the demand for biomass fuel including firewood and charcoal.

Much of the charcoal and firewood are being harvested from protected areas or areas in the vicinity of protected areas. It means that when the areas around protected areas get depleted the forest reserves and national parks will face the pressure to supply the wood and charcoal.

“The demand for firewood and charcoal is increasing,” according to Stephen Mugabi, a resident of Kanyege in Buliisa, pointing out that most of the charcoal and firewood are ferried to Masindi and Butiaba sitting on the shores of Lake Albert in the belt where oil has been discovered.

Trees have been cut in Budongo Forest to pave way for powerlines. WEMNET-U PHOTO

At Ngwendo near Buliisa Town, the pace of deforestation is increasing as the area feeds the town with the town fuel for mainly cooking and small scale industries such as bakeries and brewing activities.

### Kaiso Road, a blessing or curse

While the road is a symbol of prosperity that is promising to change the lives of people in this part of the world, it is also setting a set a stage for conflict with conservationists.

“We are concerned about this road because it is far from what we expected,” says Edgar Buhanga, a director at the Uganda Wildlife Authority (UWA), adding that what the road works cut through the hills and created barriers for the animals.

In a recent fact finding mission, the team from UWA found many foot prints of wild animals on top of a cliff, which shoulders the road. Previously, the animals could move freely, but with the recent construction the animals get stuck on one side of the road.

UNRA’s spokesperson, Daniel Alinange told Eco-Guardian that they were considering options to alleviate the danger wildlife is facing. One of them is raising the road over the swampy or diversion, according to Alinange. “We wanted to avoid the cost because it is expensive to construct a road with bridges and diversions,” says Alinange, adding that engineers under UNRA were considering the options.

The Kaiso Tonya Road, according to Alinange is part of the oil road that will open up the oil corridor. He said the road, which is being constructed from Hoima Town to Kaiso-Tonya across Kabwoya wildlife reserve, is part of the expected road network to connect western Uganda to northern Uganda.

### Bunyoro’s deforestation rate causes concerns

According to John Diisi, NFA’s coordinator for Global Information Systems and Mapping, the districts of Bunyoro are experiencing the worst rate of deforestation in the country. He said most of the forest reserves in western Uganda are part of catchment areas for rivers: Nkusi and Wambabya that feed Lake Kyoga with Water.

At the moment, the concerns are increasing over the destruction of forests, which are seen as habitats for wild animals. But when catchments of the rivers and lakes are battered, according to Diisi, production of hydro-electric power will be no more.

“A dam has been constructed across Wambabya and it is important to keep the forests so that keep releasing water to the rivers that produce electricity,” he said, adding that deforestation is going to cause negative impacts to the economy.

Dr. Callist Tindimugaya, the Commissioner in charge of the Directorate of Water Resources Management also pointed out that the extraction of oil and processing of oil also uses huge quantities of water. “Where is water going to come from? We need to be mindful of the way



The rate at which trees are cut is alarming. WEMNET-U PHOTO

how we use the resources including forests and water.”

### Investment in the green oil

Unlike the extractive oil, which is finite, the natural environment including forest reserves and parks that are endowed with large mammals will continue generating goods and services. It is important to ensure that such resources are maintained to keep regenerating the environmental services, according to Paul Hatanga of Chimpanzee Trust.

“The oil companies should contribute to conservation of forests because they generate the water that they use in their processes,” he said, adding that without water the huge investments in oil will become a waste.

He also pointed out that the promoters of electric power dams have to work with the different actors in the catchment of the rivers to

keep the water flowing.

As a way out, the conservation agencies need to work with oil companies and the private sector to invest more in management of the environment. For instance, eco-tourism if well-developed could help to create employment, recreational services while providing revenue that will turn conservation into a viable venture. The planting of tree schemes should be connected to oil since trees also absorb emissions such as Carbon-dioxide that are blamed for causing Climate Change.

Oil could contribute to sustainable forest management and also eco-tourism. It is important to observe how oil is linked to forests and people’s livelihoods and how to make such links beneficial to all the actors. If oil is extracted from the ground without paying attention to the forests and water, the future will be disaster.



# Unaccountable culture plagues forestry sector

## BY OUR REPORTER

One would have expected bottles of Champaign to pop into the air amid words like hurray, hurray on March 27, 2014. This was the 10th birthday of the National Forestry Authority (NFA) but it passed unnoticed.

The top government body on forestry is buried in the culture of silence and could not come to count its achievement as well as

failures in the past decade it has been place. This would have been an opportunity for the different actors to ask the stewards of their environment what has gone wrong and also get to know what should be expected in the coming decade.

"We do not have a forum where we could get to know what is taking place in the forestry sector," says Onesmus Mugenyi, the deputy executive director of Advocates Coalition for Development and Environment (ACODE).

Such a forum, according to Mugenyi is a mandatory requirement under the Forestry and Tree Planting Act but it has never taken place. "What was envisaged was that duty bearers would be accountable to stakeholders," he told Eco-Guardian in an interview, adding that the forum has not been operationalised.

He describes it as a pitfall in relation to accountability and governance pointing out that forestry has many people or institutions

with a stake but they cannot play their role effectively without clear checks and balances.

"The manner in which resources from government are applied remains a matter for only the Ministry of Water and Environment," says Mugenyi, adding, "there is no known transparency and accountability mechanism."

### Allocation of concessions, timber licenses

The allocation of land that is available in the

central reserves for tree planting has been buried in irregularities, which attracted a lot of public outcry until the President Yoweri Museveni intervened and stopped it.

"The process how it is allocated is not clear and lacks transparency," says Mugenyi. "How it is utilised is different from the purposes for which it was set aside."

He adds: "How do you get to know there is land for planting trees? I have heard from people that you have to keep knocking on the doors of

the NFA officials in order to let you know. That is why the President imposed a ban on allocation of land under forestry."

Efforts to clean up were instituted but they are not convincing in relation to yardsticks of accountability and transparency. "NFA has been doing an audit but it has never been made public and nobody knows about the findings of the audit team," says Mugenyi

When it comes to allocation of timber licenses, according to Stuart Maniraguha, the sector Manager for Bugoma forest under NFA in Hoima district, it has been a disaster. The Forestry Sector Support Department (FSSD) has been allocating licenses to timber harvesters without engagement of NFA.

"FSSD takes lead but does not have an inventory data," said Maniraguha. "If somebody gets a license for cutting timber without trees on a private land where do they get the timber? They end up in forest reserves."

He adds: "Hoima should not get new licenses because there are no more trees to cut on private land."

The allocation of timber licenses could be a giveaway of forest reserves under NFA by proxy. Bob Kazungu, a Forest Officer under FSSD says they do not give away trees to timber dealers by proxy. "We undertake assessments before we issue licenses," says Kazungu, adding that the licenses have restrictions to ensure that trees are not felled from Central Forestry Reserves among other conditions.

### Blaming law enforcers

In addition, the licensed pit sawyers are supposed to use handsaws and it would take a long time for them to cut trees in a forest reserve meaning that NFA officials get them in the act.

"The problem lies with law enforcement because some time back when there was a ban on felling trees, illegal timber was getting to the market in Kampala," says Kazungu.

He also pointed out that the role of FSSD is to issue licenses and that pit sawyers cannot be denied licenses unless there is evidence of malpractice.

"The NFA officials who have been resisting issuing of licenses are colluding with illegal pit sawyers so that they can continue benefiting from the illegalities," Kazungu says

He adds: "The pit sawyers who have been seeking for licenses want to trade in a clean way because they lose money."

About 80% of the timber that gets to Kampala's timber markets is chain sawn timber, which is illegal. Where are the patrol men of NFA? What happens when the law enforcement officials of NFA get illegal timber along the road? How come that we have asked them to provide evidence on the licensed timber traders who are felling trees illegally and they have never produced them?

Who will help to clean up Uganda's timber trade? There are more questions than answers. But the way forward, according to Mugenyi is to put in place proper accountability mechanisms.



## Matiri Forest: Illegal activities take new twist after evictions

BY EPHRAIM KASOZI

October 31, 2014, saw the last group of the hundreds of people leaving Matiri Central Forest Reserve, in Kabarole and Kyenjojo districts amid a protracted legal battle between authorities and encroachers.

The move that is expected to curb heavy encroachment on the country's natural resource resulted from service of various orders of both the High Court and that of appeal to the former encroachers.

In July 2014, High Court Judge David Batema, sitting in Fort Portal, Kabarole District ordered the then encroachers to temporarily vacate the forest reserves pending determination of their fate.

The Court order overturned the September 2009 orders which barred National Forest Authority (NFA) and its workers from carrying out any activity until a dispute is resolved.

"All people who settled in lands outside Mukonomura enclave whether or not protected by the former orders are given up to the end of August 2014 to harvest their food crops and peacefully move out of the suit land. It will be easy for court to hand back to them the forests once the suit (case) is disposed of," the judge ordered.

The temporary order was made in a 2005 case in which Omuhereza Rwakaboyo and 199 people sued NFA challenging eviction from Matiri CFR and subsequent eviction.

Another other was in effect to a separate case of Patrick Kalubanga and 40 others whose application to block the evictions in Mukonomura, Rwibale and Butunduzi villages in Kyenjojo District, was dismissed.

The group sued NFA arguing that the move to evict them before the boundaries are opened was mere presumption that they are occupying a forest reserve.

Justice Batema held that the earlier orders 'did more harm than good, were a disservice to the nation and are regrettable' for failing to maintain the status quo.

He said the farming activities by the group are incompatible with the prevention, protection and promotion of central forest reserve.

"This court was surprised to learn that people can claim to be lawfully settled and carrying out farming activities in the middle of a gazette forest reserve," the judge said.

In September 2009, the court had issued restraint orders against NFA and its agents from interfering with the suit land, alienating, gazetting, developing, controlling, managing or planting trees and any other activity until final disposal of the case.

The High Court orders were confirmed by Justice Kenneth Kakuru of the Appeal Court in the two separate applications to stay the eviction orders.

Justice Kakuru dismissed an application for ex-

press orders and another one seeking for orders to stay the eviction until boundary opening exercise is complete.

However, while most parts especially areas around Mukonomura enclave, are rejuvenating and some areas awaiting replanting by NFA, a group of people have resorted to illegal charcoal burning and illegal timber cutting in other areas.

Community Based Monitors (CBMs) of the CFRs say that charcoal burners disguise as people who have come to harvest their remaining food as court directed.

They also accused the Police officers deployed to maintain order during eviction, of conniving with community members to fuel the rampant charcoal burning and other illegal timber cutting.

Joseph Ruhweza, a villager found preparing a charcoal kiln alleged that he was working for a one Police officer whom he identified as Afande Kaliisa, one of the policemen at the area.

"I am one of the people evicted from the (forest) reserve and my job is charcoal burning. I was approached by Afande Kaliisa to burn these remain parts after timber cutting such that we get the proceeds and share," Ruhweza said freely from the forest reserve.

John Kibuuka, Forest Supervisor in Matiri sector says people were allowed to come back to harvest their remaining food stuffs on request from the police officers deployed in the areas.

Describing forest management as a job with challenges, Kibuuka says that following evictions, the forest reserve is not completely free from such illegalities.

"I cannot say it is not there but the challenge is that there are also private forests like in Kyenjojo and this is also far. Also these illegal timber dealers are working with intelligence to monitor our movements and this makes our work very difficult," he laments.

Kibuuka says NFA staff also relies on the community to get information for most the cases; "At the time of the eviction, people did not accept that where they stayed is a CFR where they can only be engaged to benefit."

Sam Nyakoojo, a Project officer working with local based Joint Effort to Save the Environment (JESE) observes that there is increased community awareness where the people are now able to demand for collaboration to manage forest reserves.

"The attitude of the people has changed from illegal perspective to positive means of exploiting the forest resource," he says.

### Fact:

Matiri Central Forest Reserve is part of the Muzizi River Range gazetted since 1962 and re-confirmed in 1998 by the forest reserves (Declaration) order under the Forests Act with 5,431 hectares.



## Delayed boundary opening escalates encroachment in Kibaale forests

BY VENEX WATEBAWA

Government earmarked 2 billion shillings to open boundaries for central forest reserves across the Country. The opening of the boundaries is intended iron out challenges of increased boundary disputes between NFA and the forest adjacent communities across the country.

Kagadi sector in Kibaale District is one of the forests that were earmarked to benefit from the process of opening the boundary as a measure to resolve the protracted legal battles that have left the forest experience the highest encroachment ever.

A private company M/s WEMO surveys, Mapping and planners was contracted about a last year to carry out opening of the disputed 130 Kilometers kagombe and 25 kilometers of Kasato central forest Reserves of the Kagadi Sector. The opening of Kagombe was to last 3 months commencing July –September 2014. But evidence show that only 15 kilometers of the forest boundary had been opened as of 31st December 2014 living a lot to be admired. Despite the urgency to open the boundary to bring to the end the dispute and subsequently stop the encroachment, the company to date is reluctant to complete the work.

Efforts to reach the M/S WEMO surveys, mapping and planners by press time futile as the contacts on some of the documents of the company which we obtain copies are not active.

When asked why their work is not moving on as expected given the impact of encroachment that is ongoing on Kagadi Central Forest Reserve, the NFA Executive Director, Michael Mugisha said that the speed at which work is being handled is regrettable and NFA is considering reigning.

Asked if they could consider terminating the contract, the NFA chief said that it is complex since it would result into a legal matter which makes it even more complex.

He however promised to engage M/s WEMO at personal grounds and indicate to them the critical need to execute the work as first as possible.

Kagadi Sector is experiencing intrusion of encroachers who are ferried from different parts of the country mainly from Kigezi Region and they are turning forest land into farm land and homesteads as well.

A member of the local community who requested for protection for political reasons said

that on a daily basis one person either from Kigezi or Rwanda is ferried on a bus and goes straight to the central forest to settle and one wonders who directs such persons and even their identity is not known by the local leadership. Because of the intrusion into the forest by immigrants, locals adjacent to the forests have also joined the bonanza claiming their share of the resource they have kept for years has to

be realised.

Currently thousands of hectares of Kagadi Central Forest Reserve have already been degraded with massive agriculture, settlement and timber/poles harvesting as major activities by the encroachers.

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# On a suicidal mission to save a forest



The writer takes a rest during the tour through Muzizi ranges in Kyenjojo. WEMNET-U PHOTO

**It is supposed to be a daily routine to patrol forest reserves, but have you ever imagined what patrol men go through to comb the jungles of illegal activities. Without alerting National Forestry Authority (NFA), SIMON MUSASIZI with two other journalists, in the course of their duty, put their lives at the frontline to unravel what happens in a central forest reserve (CFR).**

After waiting for more than two hours without any communication, our driver knew we had been butchered. The visibly scared young man started making calls, to alert security.

He had dropped us in Kibego CFR, one of the forest reserves in Muzizi range, Kyenjojo district that is facing massive destruction by encroachers.

But before Kibego, we had first tested our jungle skills in Itwara CFR, where we witnessed an alarming rate of deforestation.

On a single trail, we moved about one kilometer, counting more than seven timber cutting beds.

At each cutting bed, encroachers had erected tents for shelter, fully furnished with household items and foods. In some places, we found abandoned food on fire. Unfortunately, we never found anyone on site. This could be a result of either the noise we made while walking or because of the LCIII Chairman of Bugaaki Sub-county, Willy Bisanga Mugambwa, who came along with a policeman. Probably, the encroachers were alerted by the community where we passed.

That is why on our second mission, in Kibego, the community hatched a different plan that would take encroachers by surprise.

Without our knowledge, they sidelined all the security organs in the area

whom they accuse of conniving with the encroachers.

Apparently, the encroachers have a huge network, comprising influential people in government, security and NFA officials. They have spies at every boda boda stage that monitors suspicious people headed towards the forest.

To beat this network, five men sneaked away from the community to wait for us by the roadside. Headed by the chairman of the village security committee, Robert Nsungwa, they got into our double-cabin front seats, relegating my colleagues to the back.

They covered their faces, letting no one notice them as we cruised through the village. We drove off fast, breaking suddenly into the forest. Like commandos, we jumped off and disappeared on a narrow path in the forest. The driver then sped off to a nearby trading centre where he parked to disguise like nothing had happened.

With just a single panga, we cut sticks to arm each member as we descended into the forests to face men who are reported to be armed with pit-sawyers, pangas, spears and sometimes guns.

Memories of incidences where encroachers have killed NFA officials kept running into my mind that at some point I raised the red flag about our vulnerability.

"Don't worry. We are such a big number to be attacked," one of the men responded. But if only he had heard the voices of people who were talking to our driver, revealing to him that the forest has hundreds of encroachers, pitching camp in different parts of the 1447 hectares forest reserve.

It was 11am when we entered Kibego, but for over an hour, we combed the forest with no success. At some stage, it became frustrating; all you could see were old timber cutting beds with abandoned logs, some rotting. Yes, destruction had happened here, but it was some time back. You could hardly see any fresh cuts. But we had only taken a wrong route where encroachers had cleared all the big trees, deciding to shift to another side. A slight change of route landed us in a fresh and recently cleared trail.

Employing some militaristic tactics such as observing maximum silence, we soon heard the encroachers' voices, which prompted us to divide ourselves into two groups of about five people each. We each took different directions with the intention of surrounding our enemy. This scared me more because we had lost our strength of numbers.

It had made us instead more vulnerable to our enemy.

Worth still, as we moved, the dry leaves made noise that could easily notify our enemy. But these guys had gotten so comfortable in the forest to expect anyone coming for them.

For my group, the old man ahead of us took the bold steps as we followed. He used sign language whenever he heard a voice and pointed to a direction he wanted us to take. There is a time we got so near; I could actually see something cream, but he decided we go further up. I later learnt that it was a heap of timber.

When we got close to the cutting was taking place, our leader took one direction alone as his colleague took another.

I was left with *Daily Monitor's* Martin Ssebuyira, manning one of spots that could be used as an escape route by the encroachers.

"Does this guy expect us to face off with the encroachers if they came our side?" I asked my colleague.

"No way, not the guys who drag a huge log several meters to the cutting area before lifting

it up to the cutting bed," I continued.

Yet, we had no idea what was happening to the other group because we had no communication.

We only prayed that our plan worked out that we encircle the enemy that he finds it hard to escape. But thoughts of these guys scattering in our direction never stopped running through my mind. I actually said my last prayer before the whole forest went silent.

It was so silent that even the encroachers were no longer talking. I knew they had discovered our presence and were now taking positions to attack us. In the thicket we were hiding, you should have seen how our heads turned left, right and centre –looking around for our colleagues. I remember making a joke that if a python came towards us, what would we do? Make noise when we are not sure of our enemy's strategy or stay put! It was such a tough time.

It was after a while that our group leader came for us. Apparently, the mission had been accomplished –with one person arrested. It took the courage of one guy with the panga to stormed

out of the forest and hit on one of the logs. His sudden action sent encroachers scattering, with the guy who was arrested falling down from the cutting bed. He couldn't run because he had been surrounded.

Without beating him, a panicky 28-year-old Zaveriyo Tusasiibwe volunteered to give information. He said he was brought by a businessman called Iwakimu Bamanyisa who got him from Kabale after he paid him Shs120,000 claiming he was bringing him to cut eucalyptus trees on his land which neighbours the forest.

But upon reaching, Bamanyisa ordered him to join a group in the forest reserve, and since he had already taken some money, the father of three children couldn't refuse.

Tusasiibwe said they were eight people in the forest working for the business, and for about a month since he joined them, they had loaded five trucks of timber.

Tusasiibwe was handed over to NFA officials who said he was going to be instrumental in the arrest of Bamanyisa who has been key on their list of wanted encroachers.



Journalists cross a makeshift bridge in the Muzizi ranges WEMNET-U PHOTO



## R. Kazizi succumbs to deforestation

BY JOSHUA MUTALE

If you doubted the scientific warning that cutting down forests may lead to desertification, you should visit the once River Kazizi that flowed through Matiri Central Forest Reserve (CFR) in Kyenjojo District.

River Kazizi, which once had running fresh water, is no more in the area it used to flow through. One such area is that is that around Kakole Village inside the forest reserve, where trees have massively been cut down by illegal encroachers.

The river starts flows and stops in the forest reserve but shares tributaries with another River Kahombo which flows in Matiri and Ibambaro CFRs.

During the recent tour of the trail, all that was left of the river is a cracked ground and a bush depleted of trees.

"This is one of the adverse side effects of deforestation," says Robert Owinyi, the National Forest Authority (NFA) Acting Manager in charge of Muzizi River Range.

Matiri CFR has been a long time hub of illegal forest activities ranging from illegal settlements, agri-

culture and illegal timber harvest.

Despite efforts by NFA to stop them (illegalities), the Catholic Church through the Diocese of Fort Portal shocked conservationists when it was cited in the alleged acquisition of 550 acres (220 hectares) of land inside the forest reserve under questionable circumstances.

This means that the church may at any one time cut down the said chunk of land despite the looming climate change effects associated with deforestation.

Owinyi explains that the drying of River Kazizi means death of a

huge community of living organisms such as plants, animals and microbes besides loss of air, water and mineral soils, which were formerly dependent on the river.

A near similar scenario has been observed in Kagombe CFR which is home to River Muzizi, whose water levels have drastically reduced.

"River Muzizi is one of the sources of the water feeding into Lake Albert. It means when it dries up, Lake Albert will be affected," says Uzia Ndyanabo, the NFA Manager in charge of Kagadi Sector.

