

A Water and Environment Media Network publication

# Eco-Guardian

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Report is mockery,  
says activists



**Survey Report reveals  
how Bugoma forest  
reserve was shared**

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## Editorial

# Make Bugoma Forest Boundary Survey report public

The boundary opening report for Bugoma Central Forest Reserve was concluded in August 2022 and the report has since been sent to the Ministry of Water and Environment for appropriate action.

On November 30, 2023, the Minister of Lands, Housing and Urban Development the report to her counterpart in Water and Environment, more than a year after the boundary opening exercise was concluded by the Department of Surveys and Mappings.

The joint survey exercise on the 41,142 hectares of Bugoma forest was concluded, leaving stakeholders and claimants with a ray of hope that it would end the long standing dispute between National Forestry Authority (NFA), Bunyoro- Kitara Kingdom and Hoima Sugar Limited.

Officials from both the Ministry of Lands and that of Water and Environment confirmed that the report was submitted and now pending submission to Cabinet for debate and subsequent orders.

However, the leaked copy of the Bugoma Survey report raises eyebrows among the Civil Society and a section of Environment activists describing it as a sham saying it does not seem to address the disputes of land ownership that are pending before courts of law.

In Court of Appeal, NFA is battling with Hoima Sugar Limited, Bunyoro-Kitara Kingdom and the Commissioner for Land Registration over ownership of more than 5700 hectares of land comprised Bugoma forest reserve in Kikuube District.

In addition also, two other bodies are challenging the process of issuing and the legality of the Environment and Social Impact Assessment (ESIA) certificate to Hoima Sugar Limited.

Bugoma forest is among the Central forest reserves where individuals and companies among them Hoima Sugar Limited and MZ Agencies acquired land titles, allegedly without following the due process of the law.

Environment activists have demanded that the report be tabled in Cabinet, make it public and implement to resolve the disputes and conserve the forest for the health environment.

The leaked report does not highlight sufficient narrative; yes you see a map of the forest and the marks of different interests but it is lacking in terms of the narrative.

Bugoma is situated in the oil belt where we have oil exploration and development activities taking place and at the start of the oil project and it is among the critical eco-systems that were cited as important environmental resources perhaps what is called carbon sinks.

# Bugoma forest dispute: 'Settle out of court, compensate claimants'

Conservationists say since the boundaries opened have proven that the claimants are within the forest reserve, Cabinet should present the report before the courts of law and seek for orders from the encroachers to vacate.

By Jalila Namyalo

**T**he protracted dispute over ownership of land comprising of Bugoma Central Forest Reserve in Kikuube District has taken a new twist after the survey report that had been seen to resolve the impasse is challenged.

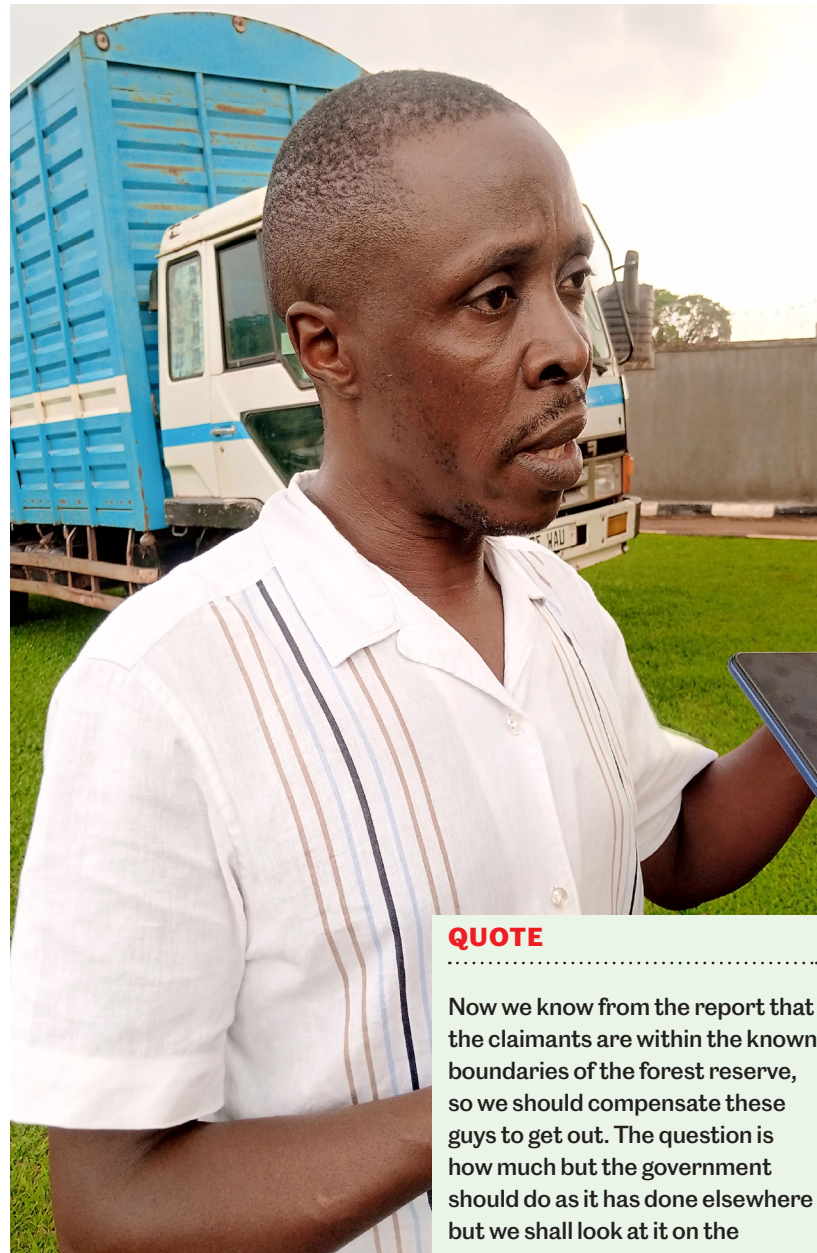
Conservationists commend the government for opening the boundary of Bugoma CFR saying that it was a good thing but the leaked survey report does not include or solve the complexities of the matter.

Anthony Wolimbwa, the National Coordinator of the Climate Action Network – Uganda (CAN-U) says that since the court cases between the National Forestry Authority (NFA), Bunyoro-Kitara Kingdom, Hoima Sugar Limited and other parties are taking long, the government need to enter into alternative dispute resolution to ensure conservation of the country's tropical rain forest.

He adds that despite the ownership dispute of the land at Bugoma pending before courts of law, the forest destruction has never stopped which calls for a need for the government to settle this dispute out of court and or buy off the interests of the kingdom and other claimants if there is proof of ownership.

"Government should have gone into negotiation with Bunyoro-Kitara Kingdom and also get land elsewhere for the kingdom equivalent to that land it claims or give them money to buy elsewhere like it did in Mbale. For other claimants, the government should work with the kingdom to compensate the claimants because all of them claim they got land from the kingdom," he says.

According to Wolimbwa, the survey report shows that most of the claimants are within the forest reserve but claiming that they got the land from Bunyoro-Kitara Kingdom yet the government also says it is forest land gazetted under the Law.



He says that there is need to know what the actual boundaries were originally and whose land was it and that after boundary opening and knowing all these complexities, the government should sit with the

**QUOTE**

Now we know from the report that the claimants are within the known boundaries of the forest reserve, so we should compensate these guys to get out. The question is how much but the government should do as it has done elsewhere but we shall look at it on the conservation side. Government should buy land and give it to Hoima sugar,"

Anthony Wolimbwa, the National Coordinator of the Climate Action Network – Uganda

kingdom to have the dispute resolved.

Wolimbwa suggests that since the boundaries opened have proven that the claimants are within the forest reserve, Cabinet should present the report before the courts of law and seek for orders from the encroachers to vacate.

As the report is, Wolimbwa says that all the people within the boundaries should vacate the forest land and cabinet should come clear on that.

"If these people were given land in error by the kingdom, they must sit and have compensation. The kingdom must compensate them but to be fair enough and given the historical basis, the government should sit with the kingdom of Bunyoro to resolve this matter. They can even compensate because we cannot replace this forest with any other thing, it is difficult, almost impossible to say the least because a natural forest will not regenerate anywhere," he adds.

Wolimbwa further suggests: "There sometimes where you have to put the law aside in the issue of conservation, the same thing in wetlands and you compensate even when the destroyers encroached or not. Just get out of your skin and compensate because you may find people have gotten titles before 1995. You are not going to create a natural forest or wetland or to solve the problem the natural reserves solve.

What you do, just compensate where you can because the law may operate up to a certain extent but ask yourself, shall the law solve the problem 100 per cent?"

He explains that there is a need for an alternative dispute resolution because the conservation value is higher than anything else that the forest provides and that you cannot find it anywhere.

"Now we know from the report that the claimants are within the known boundaries of the forest reserve, so we should compensate these guys to get out. The question is how much but the government should do as it has done elsewhere but we shall look at it on the conservation side. Government should buy land and give it to Hoima sugar," Wolimbwa adds.

He says: "It is very possible to send away Hoima Sugar because we are looking at the conservation value and sugarcanes can be grown anywhere but the forest cannot grow anywhere. Hoima Sugar Limited can be compensated but of course it will be on a higher value but we are looking

at conservation that has been here for over 100 years and it shall stay for more 100 years if conserved unlike the sugarcane which is going to be there for a few years."

From the conservation point of view, Wolimbwa says you are better off compensating all the

claimants on that land and for others who have done investments like Hoima sugar.

"The government should find alternative land for Hoima sugar like it has been doing for other investors. Why not Hoima Sugar, why do they particularly want that piece of land. Government should do a cost benefit analysis and find another land for the company and leave this for conservation, if they leave, it will regenerate automatically. But if we wait for the court process, what will be the effect on the forest, where will the forest be? For me I think we need another form of dispute resolution more achievable than the court processes."

Currently the NFA is embroiled in protracted legal battles with Bunyoro-Kitara Kingdom and Hoima Sugar Limited since 2016 when the Kingdom acquired a land title and controversially leased it to the Sugar Company for 99 years within three days.

In the case, the forestry body is seeking for court declarations that the king's stay and utilisation of the natural forest reserve is illegal and amounts to trespass.

The Omukama of Bunyoro-Kitara Kingdom is jointly accused with Hoima Sugar Limited and Uganda Land Commission (ULC) over fraudulent concealment when he applied for a freehold title for part of the forest land which was granted by the ULC.

NFA had asked the Ministry of Lands, Housing and Urban Development to cancel land titles issued in Bugoma Central Forest to enable them to secure the integrity of natural resources.

There has been on-going destruction of the forest reserve by locals purporting to be working on directives of the king to claim 8000 hectares from Bugoma Forest reserve.

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# 'Bugoma forest boundary opening report is political'

November 2023, the Ministry of Lands, Housing and Urban Development submitted the Bugoma Forest boundary opening report to the Ministry of Water and Environment for action. The report was released a year after the conclusion of the boundary opening exercise in August 2022. The Executive Director of Civic Response on Environment and Development (CRED), Mr Bashir Twesigye spoke to Wemnet-U's Ephraim Kasozi about the report in an interview. Below are the excerpts.

## **Qn: Please speak about the importance of Bugoma forest reserve.**

Ans: Bugoma Forest is an important resource, when I was in primary school, they used to tell us that it is an important resource in the country and it was the second largest forest reserve at that time. It is certainly very important to the local communities around it. I have worked with the communities next to the forest and they depended on that forest for a number of purposes including their local climate, forest products like medicine. Now that the forest has been cut, they are exposed to the vagaries of climate change; they cannot access herbal medicines and other products. It is unfortunate that this forest has been cut down and it is continuing to be cut down by the Sugar company, Hoima Sugar Limited.

## **Qn: Comment about the survey report**

Ans: From a private sector and civil society perspective, the information that we have is so limited, there is an asymmetry of information regarding this forest which has been a source of controversy for the last more than five years. Our understanding as civil society is that the cabinet ordered for the



Bugoma forest boundary opening to solve a number of issues. The key one to determine the extent of this forest at the time it was gazetted. The government was also interested in knowing what interests have arisen over time within the boundaries of this forest including people who claim customary interests and those who have gone ahead and processed land titles in the forest.

What I see is not clear whether the boundary opening is for coordinates at the time of the gazette because there is a discrepancy between the acreage at the time of the gazette and what the ministry of lands has come up with.

Although the survey report listed the interests claimed in the forest, it has not detailed the history of those interests. For instance; if MZ Agencies has a land title in the Bugoma forest, it would be relevant for the report to capture when he acquired that interest and under what

circumstances did he get this title, what acreage did he acquire, whether he has transferred his interest or part of it to other people. Therefore we do not seem to see sufficient details in the report. This means that the controversy will continue because some of the questions are not solved.

The report does not highlight sufficient narrative; yes you see a map of the forest and the marks of different interests but it is lacking in terms of the narrative. We need to hear a coherent story because so many stories have been told but we are now relying on the ministry of lands and its counterparts to tell or present solid evidence. To the extent that the report does not provide that narrative on what exactly happened is problematic. Also the report does not seem to draw any conclusions. It is hanging, it is presenting information that is presented in a way they seem not to be sure because it does not tell exactly what is happening.

I think this report will create further confusion in our leadership, the cabinet who commissioned this report and the district because they are not sure and it will create more anguish to the local communities who are suffering because of destruction of this forest.

Currently we are working with the local communities and the boundaries are not clear, Hoima Sugar Limited and some of its agents are even moving beyond the boundaries, they are moving into community held land stealing their crops which is a source of tension to the local communities and also undermines their livelihood.

I think the report falls short of what we expected; we expected something concrete, reliable and error proof that would guide the government regarding how it manages the issues of Bugoma but we have not achieved that objective.

## **Qn: How do you describe this report with all those gaps?**

Ans: It looks like a political report. When you have technocrats who do not want to take a stand like the way

politicians do, that does not help. While you may not say that it is a forged report, it seems political because it does not seem to conclusively resolve issues of which it was commissioned for.

## **Qn: What should be done to resolve the disputes now that we have this kind of report?**

Ans: I think it is the mandate of cabinet, an entity which commissioned this work to review this report to find out whether there are unanswered questions. It is the cabinet's duty to direct that those questions are re-investigated and they are resolved because beyond this report, we shall be moving to another chapter where there is confusion.

It is import that if what we are seeing here is the report that shall be presented to cabinet; it is important that the cabinet reviews it, identifies the gaps and where it is not satisfied about the findings and where it thinks there is information that is lacking, I think the best option would be that cabinet order the relevant ministry to address those questions that cabinet would have come up with.



## **Qn: You realise that this report took more than a year to come out but even when it came out, destruction is on-going, what is your take on this?**

Ans: Obviously it (report) suggests that there are big players in this but also the entities and people who are destroying the forest and getting all this confusion are powerful but I believe there is no institution or people that are more powerful than the cabinet.

I think if it took a stand and ordered, I am sure the responsible institutions; ministry of lands, ministry of water and environment and National Forestry Authority shall do the job as directed and expected to bring out concrete information on which the cabinet can base its decision.

## **Qn: You talked about the tension and threats. Exactly that is what happens to the people living near the forest reserve, what is your take on this in regard to human rights and people are fighting for their rights to a clean and safe environment**

but as they fight for it, many go to prison, others are being arrested and others going under stress. You realise that others have lost part of their land, what is your take on this?

Ans: I think this issue of Bugoma has become very difficult because there are powerful players on board who do not care about human rights and the livelihoods of local people. My organization (CRED) has supported a few people in the local communities who have been arrested.

There are leaders around the forest who have been arrested and I have been supporting most of them through their criminal prosecution and recently in February one of the cases was dismissed. It was even never been heard, there is a lot of impunity that is going on where people have lost livelihoods.

Poor people who cannot afford two meals a day, their crops have been taken over by powerful people in the district security that have actually exploited the confusion and have become the new landlords in areas between the community and the Hoima Sugar's interest. So we have found a group of new landlords that have occupied a clear gap there and they are beating up communities, confiscating people's property and crops while taking advantage of the situation. It is unfortunate that people who have been cited in these cases are the people who are responsible for security in the district and it becomes difficult on how to handle and address that situation for community people. For instance a community member in a village called Rwenkobe, it becomes more challenging.

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# Worry as Uganda's tropical forest turned into cultivation areas

The destruction of Bugoma Central Forest Reserve started when the Omukama (King) of Bunyoro Kitara leased out more than 5700 hectares of forest land to Hoima Sugar Limited.



Part of destroyed forest waiting for planting in Nyairongo

By **EPHRAIM KASOZI & JALIRA NAMAYALO**

**A**sneak through Kabwoya and Kyangwali sub counties in Kikuube District expecting to see grown trees and bushes that covered large tracts will now lead you into plantations.

Areas that used to be covered by trees are now occupied mainly by sugar cane and maize plantations.

The destruction of Bugoma Central Forest Reserve started when the Omukama (King) of Bunyoro Kitara leased out more than 5700 hectares of forest land to Hoima Sugar Limited.

The move that sparked protracted legal battles involving the National Forestry Authority (NFA) against the Omukama of Bunyoro Kitara and the Commissioner for land registration.

In the same struggle Civil Society organisations also sued the National Environment Management Authority and Hoima Sugar Limited for issuance a disputed Environment and Social Impact Assessment Report that allowed the sugar firm to destroy the forest for cane plantation.

The cases currently stagnated in the Court of Appeal pending hearing

and determination.

Activists and local residents residing adjacent to the Bugoma Central Forest Reserve are crying foul saying that despite the pending court cases.

Deo Asaba Isoke, resident of Kaseeta Village living adjacent to Bugoma forest says that The forest now is finished, they are cutting down the forest, people are burning charcoal and taking timber and many things are being done there to destroy the forest totally by people who are encouraged by NFA because a lay man cannot carry a machine to the forest and cut trees

**THE FOREST**  
Bugoma forest plays a number of roles in protecting ecosystems, stabilizing the climate, and promoting tourism in the country; the forest is habitat for wild animals and numerous tree species, so it is important for biodiversity conservation.

Generally the main economic activity for Uganda is mainly agriculture, tourism and fisheries among others and that they are supported by the existence of Bugoma forest.

without notice of NFA.

As regards the impact, Asaba warns that the drought will come saying that when the forest is completely destroyed, there is no water, no rain. In a few years to come we are going to suffer from dry spells and extreme weather conditions.

Desire Nkurunziza, a local leader at Nyairongo area says that Bugoma forest is now for Hoima Sugar and for agriculture by the well to do and protected individuals.

He says that the cultivators started as encroachers who later turned out to claim ownership of different parts of the forest reserve even when the boundary marks find them inside the forest.

Nkurunziza says that it started with groups doing illegal logging and charcoal burning before cultivators embarked on crop growing despite the efforts and pending cases before the courts of law.

"All the activities are going on under the watch of those in authority. And to make matters worse, the government went silent on the survey report which we thought would help stop the destruction and reverse the process," he laments.

According to Nkurunziza, in June



2022, a consent agreement between cultivators of Nyairongo and Hoima Sugar Limited was signed directing more than 500 farmers to vacate the reserve land but only be allowed to harvest their crops and vacate the forest land but in vain.

He revealed that the cultivators from the villages of Nyairongo, Karokarungi, Rwenkobe, Rwembaho, Nyambogo and Kabegaramire were said to be illegally planting their crops namely maize, beans, Irish potatoes and millet.

"I committed myself on behalf of the local residents that once the crops mature and are harvested, they will not go back to plant new crops. These crops were to take 3 months," says Nkurunziza adding that they had agreed that whoever would be found in the forest land after, that person would be a trespasser and charged in courts of law for criminal trespass.

While appealing for the implementation of the presidential directives on Bugoma, Nkurunziza laments that despite their effort to save



the country's natural resource, authorities in Hoima and Kikuube districts have since turned against them by way of arrests and imprisonment to threaten their lives and silence them.

Hassan Mugenyi, the leader of the Save Bugoma campaign in Kyangwali sub county area says that they are worried that the strong winds would destroy their homes after destruction of the forest.

"Very soon we shall face starvation resulting from long dry spells because the forest which acted as the catchment is no more. Even those crops from which they are earning now are not sustainable," he warns.

Conservationists say that by allowing Hoima Sugar limited to take part of Bugoma forest was one of the biggest mistakes that the government in general as well as the ministry of lands and Nema did and that unless Hoima Sugar is chased out of the forest.

They say that it is unlikely that the country shall stop the destruction of the entire forest because in order to save the

forest, Hoima Sugar needs to be put out of the forest land but also the Ministry of lands must urgently share with the public the results of the boundary opening exercise that they undertook between 2021 and 2022.

Bugoma forest plays a number of roles in protecting ecosystems, stabilizing the climate, and promoting tourism in the country; the forest is habitat for wild animals and numerous tree species, so it is important for biodiversity conservation.

Generally the main economic activity for Uganda is mainly agriculture, tourism and fisheries among others and that they are supported by the existence of Bugoma forest.

This means that every Ugandan needs to be fighting to save the forest so as to save the economic value we get from the forest.

David Kureeba, an environmentalist describes the ongoing destruction as a disaster saying with activities like automobiles such as graders, tractors, trailers that would be moving in that area, certainly you need a system that would sequester a lot of carbon that is emitted.

"The unfortunate fact is that in the same region, they constructed an airport. I am yet to find out whether that was not part was not part of the offset because if you have an airport, you need to have an aviation emission offset. If Bugoma is one of those offsets, what is the other offset not that it is being given away?"



## Women counting losses as Bugoma being extinct

By **JALIRA NAMYALO**

**O**n a visit to homes in Kaseeta parish and Nyairongo villages, you find most women doing house chores, some loitering while others gathered in conversations but without being involved in any activity seen to generate income.

Some of the women spend most of their time in gatherings which have less impact on their livelihood for lack of tangible results.

The women residing adjacent to Bugoma forest reserve lament that since the commencement of the destruction of the forest, the

activities through which they used to earn some income were curtailed thereby negatively impacting on their families.

Describing Bugoma forest as a source of the raw materials for their handmade items like baskets, mats, walking sticks as well as white aunts and mushroom for sauce and poles for construction, the women say that all is no more.

Hellen Kabanyoro, a resident of Kaseeta village laments that with the destruction of Bugoma Central Forest Reserve, the women have lost immensely and that they are undergoing difficult situations because family income and feeding have

”

*“Because of the disappearing forest cover, we have started seeing rivers drying up for example Rivers like Rutohwa and Hohwa are drying up especially during sun shine and other small channels are also affected and this too has started impacting on our water sources,”*

lowered.

“We have lost a lot and the list is endless. Starting from the raw materials which we used to get for handcrafts, we no longer have access to them and even the children at school can no longer study because the source of materials have since been destroyed. We cannot explain what happened on those lessons. We are only allowed to go to the forest at the weekend (Saturdays and Sundays) but even a handle for a hoe, you are not allowed to get it and once caught with it or getting it, you are serious canned,” says Kabanyoro.

She says: “We can no longer



get poles to construct beds for our tobacco and houses, unless you bribe the officials (omukulu) but most of us do not have the money to give bribes. Some of us (women) are widows with no support but you cannot go to cut a pole to construct a small house, we resorted to bricks which again are expensive for us with no sources of income.”

As an old woman, Kabanyoro says that she would be earning from handcrafts to get basic needs of life but she cannot access raw materials from the forest to make them yet she and others have orphans in their homes who can no longer afford to go to school for lack of dues.

“To our surprise, we hear and see the forest disappearing and we are worried about the effects and because they are going to be disastrous to us; lose most cultural sites and materials is also negative to us. Why do not we say that we have lost and a lot of things?” she wonders.

According to Kabanyoro, they are not allowed to access the forest on week days (Monday to Friday) and that if found, they are beaten and or arrested and fined money; “so you cannot go there when you do not have the money to pay fine. The males who go there steal fully are chased and in all this, women cannot be spared from being raped by those cutting timber and farm workers because they are

sexually starved while at work.”

For firewood, Kabanyoro says they have since resorted to using maize cob, stems, leaves and other vegetation to cook and that they are wondering where the people cultivating, cutting timber and others burning charcoal in the forest are getting the permission from and how do they enter because for the forest is disappearing.

“Because of the disappearing forest cover, we have started seeing rivers drying up for example Rivers like Rutohwa and Hohwa are drying up especially during sun shine and other small channel are also affected and this too has started impacting on our water sources,” she adds.

Lovinsa Namatovu, a woman leader at Nyairongo Parish says

that during the boundary opening for Bugoma Forest, the women and the leaders were not involved but instead forced to back off the exercise with use of the gun.

“...we were put on gun point so we stopped following them and even our leaders were denied chance to participate. We were kicked off the exercise but we even do not know the outcome of the (boundary opening) exercise because the report has never been revealed to us,” she laments.

Namatovu a women council leader says that there is confusion in matters regarding Bugoma forest because even the projects we (community) were supposed to be accessing are in vain.

She reveals that at the start of destroying the forest, the communities living adjacent to the reserve were promised that some roads would be upgraded, hospitals built and facilitated and a lot other things that were promised while sensitising us to allow cutting of part of the forest were never provided.

“We are now living in human – wildlife conflicts because the habitats for the wild animals were destroyed so they come to people. Chimpanzees attacked Karokarungi village and the chairperson reported the matter but they (authorities) just came and sensitised us to agree and leave with those animals,” she cried.

According to Namatovu, people’s plants are destroyed by the wild animals but they are not compensated; “and we also have a high rate of school drop outs including girls who were impregnated by people cutting the forest and are now bearing children without knowing their fathers.”

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# Bugoma forest land hired to cultivators at Shs300,000 per acre



By EPHRAIM KASOZI

**B**ugoma Central forest reserve in the Midwestern Uganda has been turned into farms for cultivation as the destruction of the green belt spanning two districts in the mid-western Uganda is ongoing unabated.

are working secretly as spies for those in authority in Kikuube District.

Local leaders say that there is a group comprising of those in authority who recruited a section of community members as agents to collect money from timber dealers, charcoal traders who destroy the forest before the land is hired out to cultivators who grow maize, Irish potatoes and beans.

Desire Nkuruziza, a local leader at Nyairongo area says

that Bugoma forest is now for Hoima Sugar and for agriculture.

“They (authorities) have their agents in the villages who collect money where an acre goes for Shs300,000 per season and they do not issue receipts. Therefore when you go to court you will have no proof,” he says.

A June 2022 document titled ‘consent agreement between cultivators of Nyairongo and Hoima Sugar Limited’ shows that a total of 109 people representing other cultivators

Desire Nkuruziza (right) with colleague during a meeting at Nyairongo Village



Land comprising part of Bugoma forest opened up for planting in Kikuube District.

agreed to only be allowed to harvest their crops and vacate the forest land but in vain.

In the letter, the chairperson of Local council 1 of the villages of Nyairongo, Karokarungi, Rwenkobe, Rwembaho, Nyambogo and Kabegaramire, Mr Desire Nkuruziza stood surety for the cultivators who were said to be illegally planting their crops namely maize, beans, Irish potatoes and millet.

During the June 2022 meeting held at the office of the Resident District Commissioner (RDC), the land that was being encroached upon was said to be for Hoima Sugar Limited.

“I commit myself on behalf of the local residents that once the crops mature and are harvested, they will not go back to plant new crops. These crops will take 3 months, that is

June, July and August 2022,” reads the letter adding: “Whoever will be found in this land after this period will be a trespasser and charged in courts of law for criminal trespass.”

Mr Nkuruziza’s letter was witnessed by Buhaguzi MP Francis Kazini, Kikuube Resident District

Commissioner Amlan Tumusiime, Kikuube District Speaker Christopher Nkulu, and District Councilor representing Kabwoya Risah Kwikirizi as well as Hoima Sugar representative G. Supesh.

In an interview, Nkuruziza

says that those cultivators were described as encroachers and that they agreed with authorities never to return after harvest of their crops.



“But since then, the people are cultivating without any hindrance yet the RDC and the chairperson of the district and other authorities are aware of the destruction,” he said.

Asked why the destruction has persisted despite the presence of the district security committee, Nkuruziza referred the matter to the RDC whom he described as the chairperson of security in the area.

A source who declined to be named said in an interview that a meeting comprising of the RDC and police chiefs and their agents was held on March 4 this year where it was agreed that Shs800 million be collected to bribe high profile people at the National Forestry Authority and the National Environment

Management Authority (Nema) to allow the cultivators.

According to the source, Bugoma forest is at the verge of extinction with the ongoing curtail involving the people in authority.

Hassan Mugenyi, the chairperson of Save Bugoma Forest campaign at local level says that currently people disguising as Hoima Sugar Limited are destroying the forest since the company came with authority and land title to own and work from the forest land.

“If Hoima Sugar Limited does not stop them, no one will stop them. Therefore for us we know that it is Hoima Sugar that is destroying the forest because it started with the project to destroy it,” he adds.

# Survey Report reveals how Bugoma forest reserve was shared

By EPHRAIM KASOZI

A leaked survey report for the boundary opening of Bugoma Forest Reserve in Kikuube District is pending submission to Cabinet for debate and final directions.

On November 30, 2023, the Minister of Lands, Housing and Urban Development, Ms Judith Nabakooba submitted the report to the Ministry of Water and Environment for appropriate action.

The report was submitted more than a year after the conclusion of the boundary opening exercise that was conducted by the Department of Surveys and Mapping.

This followed a 2019 Cabinet directive to open the boundaries of Bugoma forest as a measure to resolve the protracted legal disputes pitting National Forestry Authority (NFA), a government agency that is mandated to protect and manage all central forest reserves across the country and Bunyoro-Kitara Kingdom as well as companies such as Hoima Sugar Limited and MZ Agencies.

The report whose excerpts are herewith below highlights the boundaries of the tropical rain forest with claimants thereon but does not give details of how the claimants came to possess the reserve land.

While listing NFA as a claimant, the survey report lists 23 claimants of the disputed forest land without giving their history and recommendations.

Handwritten notes: "Take note of this development... Vision 2040... Surveyors to go and interpret to... High level report... H/2/20"

Official stamp: "THE REPUBLIC OF UGANDA, Office of the Minister, MINISTRY OF LANDS, HOUSING AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT, P.O. BOX 7096, KAMPALA, UGANDA"

Handwritten date: "01 DEC 2023"

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In any correspondence on this subject please quote No LAD 24/01

30<sup>th</sup> November, 2023

The Hon. Minister  
 Ministry of Water and Environment  
 KAMPALA

## CABINET DIRECTIVE ON SURVEY AND OPENING UP BOUNDARIES IN BUGOMA CENTRAL FOREST RESERVE

Reference is made to a letter Ref: DEA/96/269/01, dated 31<sup>st</sup> August 2020, written by the Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Water and Environment addressed to the Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Lands, Housing and Urban Development on the above captioned subject matter.

Please find enclosed the Survey and Opening Up Boundaries in Bugoma Central Forest Reserve Report prepared by the Department of Surveys and Mapping as per the Cabinet Directive No. 465 (CT 2019) for your appropriate action.

Yours sincerely,

Judith Nabakooba  
 MINISTER OF LANDS, HOUSING AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT

- CC: The Minister of State for Water
- " The Minister of State for Environment
- " The Ministers of State - Lands, Housing and Urban Development
- " The Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Water and Environment
- " The Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Lands, Housing and Urban Development
- " The Executive Director, National Forest Authority

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THE REPUBLIC OF UGANDA

MINISTRY OF LANDS, HOUSING AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT

## REPORT ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF CABINET DIRECTIVE TO SURVEY AND OPEN BOUNDARIES OF BUGOMA CENTRAL FOREST RESERVE

By

MINISTRY OF LANDS, HOUSING & URBAN DEVELOPMENT

30<sup>th</sup> NOVEMBER 2023

**INTRODUCTION**

Cabinet under minute 465 (CT 2019) directed the Ministry of Water and Environment to open the boundaries of Bugoma Central Forest Reserve (CFR) to: -

- 1) Determine whether Hoima Sugar encroached onto the Bugoma CFR land.
- 2) Resolve other pending boundary verification exercises ordered by court and ensure the conservation of the forest.

The Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Water and Environment requested the Permanent Secretary Ministry of Lands, Housing and Urban Development to assign a team of Surveyors to join a team from National Forest Authority (NFA) and the Ministry of Water and Environment (MWE) in implementing the afore mentioned Cabinet Directive.

The Commissioner Surveys and Mapping and a team of surveyors from the Department of surveys and Mapping, the Ministry of Water and Environment and NFA travelled to Hoima district on the 14<sup>th</sup> December 2020 to embark on the implementation of this directive.

**LOCATION**

Bugoma Central Forest Reserve is a protected tropical forest that is located in Kikuube District north of Kagadi District and south of Hoima District in Western Uganda.

**CONTROL DATA USED**

- a) Control data from Department of surveys and mapping, Entebbe (Uganda Geodetic Reference Frame Network, UGRFN).
- b) Prints from the Department of Surveys and Mapping (CIM\_47\_2\_E\_N, CIM\_47\_4\_E\_N, CIM\_48\_1\_E\_N and CIM\_48\_3\_E\_N),
- c) Topographic Maps (47\_2, 47\_4, 48\_1 and 48\_3),
- d) Boundary Plans (BP 1507 & BP 1637)
- e) and Ortho-photo) were used as base maps for the survey.

**INSTRUMENTS AND SOFTWARE USED:**

1. Sets of GNSS receivers (Single frequency and Geodetic)
2. Several Laptop Computers
3. ArcMap 10.8
4. Autodesk AutoCAD Civil 3D 2018

**METHODOLOGY**❖ **Reconnaissance, Mobilization and Sensitization**

The implementation of the Cabinet Directive on the survey and opening of boundaries of Bugoma central forest reserve started with mobilization, Sensitization and reconnaissance.

Several preparatory meetings were held at various stages with the first preparatory meeting held at the Ministry of Lands, Housing and Urban Development on the 08th of October 2020.

In the meeting it was agreed that an Instruction to Survey (IS) for Bugoma CFR be issued by Commissioner Surveys and Mapping to survey and process the survey field data at the Ministry Zonal Office for the purposes of Bugoma CFR delineated in the National Land Information System.

The Commissioner Surveys and Mapping and a team of surveyors from the Department of surveys and Mapping, the Ministry of Water and Environment and NFA travelled to Hoima and Kikuube Districts on the 14<sup>th</sup> December 2020 to embark on the implementation of this directive.

Stakeholder engagement meetings were held with the District Local Government leaders, Bunyoro Kitara Kingdom and Security Organs at the Regional and District level from the 15<sup>th</sup> to the 17<sup>th</sup> of December 2020.

During these stakeholder engagements, the team received feedback and guidance from the different District Security Organs that the timing was not the best to proceed with the implementation of the

Cabinet Directive especially that it was a political season. That this would stretch the security organs hence they may fail to provide adequate security for the survey teams during the implementations.

The RDC and RPC requested that the exercise be put on halt and promised that they would keep Team informed of when the implementation of the directive should begin and therefore the exercise was halted on the 18<sup>th</sup> of December 2020.

The implementation of the Cabinet Directive on the survey and opening of boundaries of Bugoma Central Forest reserve resumed on the 15<sup>th</sup> of November 2021 with mobilization, Sensitization, reconnaissance, control extension, Boundary opening and Pillar Emplacement.

Several stakeholder engagement meetings were held at various stages. Boundary opening survey for the Bugoma CFR and pillar emplacement was embarked on and moved on covering a total of 132.8Km of the cutline.

However, during the boundary opening and pillar emplacement, communities near the forest reserve, local leaders and Bunyoro Kitara Kingdom complained that they were not part and partial of the exercise. They raised concerns that NFA was in the lead and yet they expected the Ministry of Lands, Housing and Urban Development to take the lead in the implementation of the directive. The exercise was again halted by the Kikuube Resident District Commissioner during a meeting on the 21<sup>st</sup> December 2021 in which it was resolved that all stakeholders be engaged and consulted with a clear methodology and terms of reference if the survey and boundary opening is to be successful.

Another attempt at the implementation of the cabinet directive was embarked on the 17<sup>th</sup> of February 2022 under the following Terms of Reference (ToR);

1. Receive documents on land ownership including Court cases from all claiming ownership of part of the Bugoma CFR for further verification.

2. Resume and complete the opening and marking of the remaining 51 km of boundary of Bugoma Central Forest Reserve as per the boundary plans and gazetting instruments
3. Determine whether Hoima Sugar Limited encroaches on the Bugoma Central Forest Reserve
4. Assess the Impact of other pending boundary verification exercises (as ordered by court) on the Forest
5. Emplacement of concrete boundary pillars on the set-out boundary line.
6. Compile a comprehensive report for the exercise
7. Present the field survey findings to the stakeholders

The methodology revolved around the following;

- a) Gathering and analyzing of all relevant spatial data of the area (such as CFR boundary plans, charted surveys plus the offers from District Land Boards)
- b) Mobilizing the various local authorities (Bunyoro Kingdom, RDC, LC 5 , all the claimants and the affected at village level)
- c) Sensitizing the communities that earn a living in the vicinity of the CFR
- d) Comprehensive Report generating complete with the accompanying maps
- e) Presentation of the report to the various authorities

Several land ownership documents were received from twenty-eight (28) persons (See List of Documents attached). Out of the twenty-eight documents received, thirteen (13) were verified by ministry of Lands, Housing and Urban Development while the others were submitted to Bunyoro Kitara Kingdom since they all alleged to have been offered the land by the Omukama of Bunyoro Kingdom.

The team that travelled to Masindi Ministry Zonal Office to verify the land ownership documents provided discovered several other attempted surveys and land registrations within and around the forest reserve (See Map attached)

In late July and early August 2022, the boundary opening was

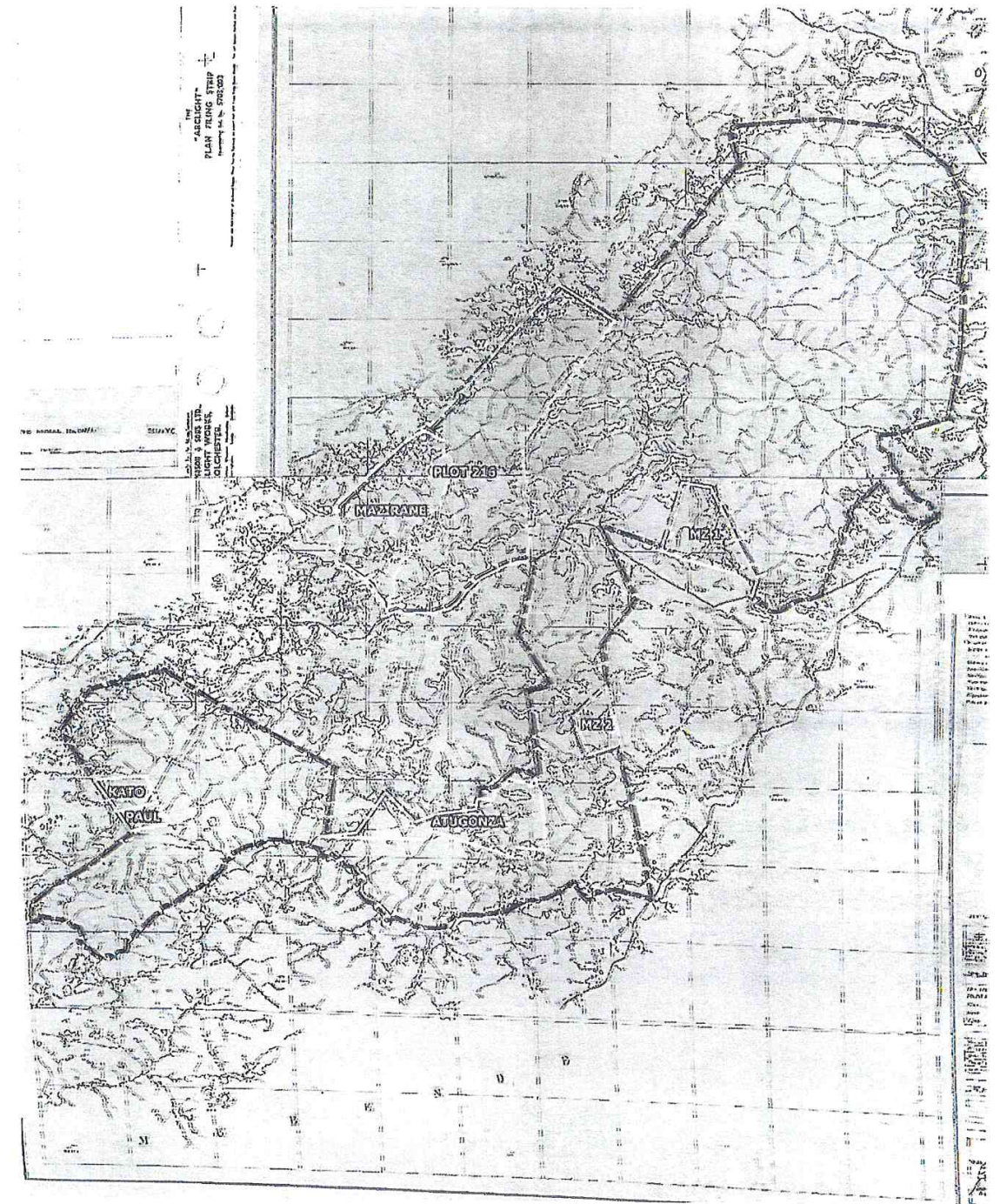


finally completed.

Also several claimants parcels were mapped to clearly locate them on the overall report

FINDINGS

LOCATION OF CLAIMANTS IN RELATION TO BUGOMA FOREST RESERVE BOUNDARY PLAN NUMBER 1507 AND 1637 OF JANUARY 1962



## Claimants From The Survey And Boundary Opening Of Bugoma CFR

NO	CLAIMANT	CLAIM	BASIS OF CLAIM	REMARKS
1	NATIONAL FORESTRY AUTHORITY	Approximately 41144 hectares of land with a total perimeter of 177km. 132.5km of this boundary is a cutline while 44.5km of the boundary is marked by natural features including river Nkusi (37.4km), river Nyakatete (3.7km) and river Kamugamba (3.4Km)	Statutory Instrument No. 63 "the Forest Reserves (Declaration) Order, 1998"  Old maps (F.D. Map REF No. BN/63, map sheet reference 47/2,4; 48/1,3)  Boundary plans BP.1507, and 1637	The perimeter is witnessed by majestic concrete pillars standing 1.1m above ground level (See map in annex i)  The Boundary plans have clearly marked turning points.  The boundary plans compute to a total area of 39,492,620 hectare.
2	HOIMA SUGAR LIMITED	5,779.7 Hectares (14,281.64 Acres) in Kyangwali Estate	Copy of Certificate of Title (Volume HQT887 Folio 12) Plot 216 Block 2 Buhaguzi  Copy of Search Statement dated 10 <sup>th</sup> June 2021  NEMA ESIA Certificate  Court Judgement arising out of Civil Suit No: 0031 of 2016 at Masindi	Plot boundaries opened and land located as per the survey file under Instruction to Survey (I/S) number MM/2/9414 Plot currently utilized by Kyangwali Mixed Land use Project,  According to the Judgement: 'The Omukama of Bunyoro Kitara Kingdom and Hoima Sugar are the lawful owners of the land'

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NO	CLAIMANT	CLAIM	BASIS OF CLAIM	REMARKS
				comprised in FRV HQT876 Folio 18 Buhanguzi Block 2, Plot 216 Relevant documents attached as annex iv
3	ATUGONZA FRANCIS	1,318 Hectares (3,256.78 Acres) of land in Rwempunu	Customary claim (coordinates of boundary provided)	Police reports  Customary claim fall within the CFR  Relevant documents annexed in (ii)
4	BITARABEHO SHABAN SHABI TRADING COMPANY LIMITED	Approximately 10 Acres of Land encroached.	Purchase agreements  Land offer from the LC 1 Mburara village  Freehold certificate of title Block 2 Buhaguzi Plot 291 approximately 35.845Ha	Consent Settlement order instructs the parties to resurvey and remove the encroachments  Portions of the title fall within the reserve. Relevant documents annexed in iii
5	BALIHAMWE RAJAB	150 Acres of Customary land in Kibaale LC1 Kyererezi	Offer letter from the Office of the Omukama	Claim is customary land falling within the CFR Relevant documents annexed in v
6	MUGENYI BPHRAIMU	About 377.167 Hectares (932 Acres) of land in Katikara - Ngogoli, Kyangwali	Customary land offer from Bunyoro Kitara Kingdom (Bunyoro Customary Certificate)	The customary land claims falls within the forest. Relevant documents annexed in

11

NO	CLAIMANT	CLAIM	BASIS OF CLAIM	REMARKS
7	RWEMERA MAZIRANE EMMY OF BISHAKI FARM DEVELOPMENT S LIMITED	600 Hectares (1482.63 2 Acres) at Wairagaza village, Kyangwal i sub county	Land Purchase Agreements from Natives  Land inspection fee payment receipts to Hoima DLB  Letter of No Objection from NFA as per approval of land application (LAN/1204 dated 26 <sup>th</sup> February 2013)  Letter from Secretary District Land Board.	vi  Land claim falls within Hoima Sugar Limited land.  Relevant documents annexed in vii
8	BYARUHANGA MATIA, MUTEKANIZA FRED AND ISINGOMA ISAAC	517 Hectares of land at Nyairongo village	Land offer from Bunyoro Kitara Kingdom  Land offer from the Office of the Omukama	The customary land interest falls within the forest  Relevant documents attached as annex viii)
9	KASAIJA SERESTI	500 Acres of land	Land application form Offer letter from the Office of the Omukama  Land offer letter from Bunyoro Kitara Kingdom  Land purchase agreement	Customary interests falling within the Bugoma forest.  Relevant documents annexed in ix
10	SEMATE CRESTOM	500 Acres of land in Nyakanyera, Hohwa- Kaseeta	Land allocation letter from Bunyoro Kitara Kingdom  Offer letter from the Office of the Omukama	The documents used as basis of claim do not explicitly mention the claimant.  Relevant

NO	CLAIMANT	CLAIM	BASIS OF CLAIM	REMARKS
			Payment receipts to Hoima DLG  Purchase agreement  Court Order arising out of MSc Application No: 70 of 2017 (Civil Suit No 016 of 2015)	documents annexed in x
11	TUSABOMU GERALD, KIWANUKA RICHARD AND OTHERS	500 Acres of land in Nyairongo Rwenkobe villages, Kabwoya Subcounty	Offer letter from the Office of the Omukama  Land allocation letter from Bunyoro - Kitara Kingdom  Court Order arising out of MSc Application No: 70 of 2017 (Civil Suit No 016 of 2015))	Land within the CFR Relevant documents annexed in xi
12	REV JOACHIM MUGISA ATEENYI	150 Hectares (370.65 Acres) and another 200 Acres of land in Katikara - Ngogoli, Kyangwali	Land offer from the Office of the Omukama dated 4/7/2014 and another dated 14/4/2016  Land allocation from Bunyoro Kitara Kingdom dated 21/7/2014 and another dated 22/6/2016  Application letter to the Omukama of Bunyoro Kitara Kingdom	Customary land falls within the CFR  Relevant documents annexed in xii
13	MUSTAFA ZAIDI (M.Z. AGENCIES LIMITED)	2000 Hectares (4,942 Acres) of Customary land at Kisaru, Kabwoya 296.5720 Hectares (732.83	Grant of customary land was awarded to Mustafa Zaidi by the Omukama of Bunyoro Kitara Kingdom.	Boundary plan BP 1507 depicts the location of plots 105 to be traversed b

NO	CLAIMANT	CLAIM	BASIS OF CLAIM	REMARKS
		Acres) at Nyangabi, Kimbugu 662.3484 Hectares (1,636.663 Acres) at Nyaigugu	Copy of Certificate of Title (Volume MAS21 Folio 18) Plot 115 Block 21 Buhaguzi Copy of Certificate of Title (Volume MAS20 Folio 20) Plot 105 Block 21 Buhaguzi  Consent judgement under civil suit number 20 of 2019.	marked cornerstones consecutively running from number 2, 3, 4 upto 5. Boundary plan 1507 leaves plot 105 out of the forest reserve  Boundary plan 1637 depicts the current location of plot 115 to be traversed by marked cornerstones consecutively running from number 62, 63, 64, unto 65. Boundary plan 1637 leaves plot 115 out of the forest reserve.  Consent judgement between NFA and MZ further cements the location of plots 105 and 115 out of the forest reserve.  Relevant documents annexed in xiii
14	TULIPONA	2,000 acres of	Land Allocation	Land overlaps

NO	CLAIMANT	CLAIM	BASIS OF CLAIM	REMARKS
	VETERAN'S ASSOCIATION	Customary land at Nyairongo, Kabwoya	from the Office of the Omukama  Certificate of Incorporation of Tulipona	Relevant documents annexed in xiv
15	KAGANDA MUHAMMADI	60 Acres of Customary land in Kibale village, Kyangwali	Land offer from the Office of the Omukama  Lease offer from the County Chief, Bunyoro Kitara Kingdom	Customary land interests fall within the CFR  Relevant documents annexed in xv
16	OMUHEREZA MURUNGI, MIGISA MURUNGI AND KUSEMERERWA MURUNGI	72.969 Hectares of land at Ndongo	Copy of Certificate of Title (Volume HQT248 Folio 22) plot 118 Block 4 Buhaguzi  Payment receipt for registration fees  Purchase agreement	Relevant documents annexed in vi
17	RURALYA JOHN	500 Acres of land in Nyairongo village	Land offer letter from the office of the Omukama  Land allocation letter from Bunyoro Kitara Kingdom  Court order arising out of Msc Application No: 70 of 2017 (Civil suit No: 016 of 2015)  Payment receipts for application and land	Relevant documents annexed in vii

NO	CLAIMANT	CLAIM	BASIS OF CLAIM	REMARKS
			Land purchase agreement	
18	RUTARO FRANCIS EXERVIA	153.632 Hectares, 57.9 Hectares and 40.493 Hectares of land at Kisindi/Kibali	Copies of Certificate of Titles (Volume HQT237 Folio 24, Volume HQT 349 Folio 10 and Volume HQT 349 Folio 12) Plots 19, 28 and 29 Respectively all of Block 21 Buhaguzi  Letters of Administration Introduction/Recognition letter from the LC 1  Letter of No Objection from the District Forest Officer, Hoima  Notice of Forest encroachment by NFA	Relevant documents annexed in xviii
19	TURYAMUREBA SHABAN	35.845 Hectares of land at Nyabunende	Copy of Certificate of Title (Volume MAS91 Folio 11) plot 291 Block 2 Buhaguzi  License to Harvest Timber	Relevant documents annexed in xix
20	BUGOMA JUNGLE LODGE	9.311 Ha located in Nyakafunjo	Copy of Certificate of Title (Vol MAS1 Folio 24) Plot 109 Block 21 Buhaguzi	Land falls out of the CFR Relevant documents annexed in xx
21	KATO ALFRED (KOMUKYEYA DOREEN AND KYEBAMBE RUTH)	1,221 acres of Customary land at Mandwiga	1. Introduction and recognition LC 1 letter  11. List of coordinates for boundary 111. Land offer letter from the	Customary land claim falls in the CFR  Relevant documents annexed in xxi

NO	CLAIMANT	CLAIM	BASIS OF CLAIM	REMARKS
			Bunyoro Kitara Kingdom addresses an offer of 764.99hectares to Doreen ad Ruth.	
22	PRINCE FRED MUGENYI ROLAND AND OTHERS	2 sq miles of land located at Katikara-Ngogooli LCs	Land application form Offer letter from the Office of the Omukama  Land offer letter from Bunyoro Kitara Kingdom  Memorandum of lease by Bunyoro Kitara Kingdom Land Board	Customary land claim falls in the CFR  Relevant documents annexed in xxii
23	KYENKYA MARGARET	342.2 Hectares (845.76 acres) at Nsozi	Copy of Certificate of title ( Volume HQT594 Folio 11) Plot 206 and 211 Block 2 Buhaguzi.	Plot boundaries opened and land located as per the survey file under file under Instruction to Survey (I/S) Number E/2/2720. Land falls within the CFR Relevant documents annexed in xxiii

END

# Local leader: I have been imprisoned three times for defending Bugoma'

BY EPHRAIM KASOZI

**P**eople who speak the truth about Bugoma forest like me have no peace in Kikuube and Hoima districts for they face threats and or actual arrests and imprisonment.

Although the benefits of Bugoma Forest are meant for the good of every Ugandan, local people and their leaders within Kikuube District lament that the situation has since changed.

They say that currently Bugoma forest reserve is for the good of a few individuals and companies and that as a result, any one raising any objection would easily be arrested, charged and imprisoned.

Desire Nkurunziza, a human rights defender says that those in authority in Kikuube District have since turned risky for any local community leader to speak to the media or in a radio talk show.

"I want you to know that we have given you the information but when you leave we shall remain in Police. What I have observed is that government officials and some other leaders do not want Bugoma forest to exist because they are collecting a lot of money from it. You cannot cut timber year in year out without paying license to the district as well as burning charcoal. We cannot protest and fight against the destruction of Bugoma forest for over five years

without government knowing it," says Nkurunziza.

The environment activist, Nkurunziza, adds that the leaders who talk and protest against Bugoma forest destruction severally are like torturing the government that is why they (officials) get angry and torture them too by arresting and imprisoning them.

"I have been arrested three times, with them thinking that I will reduce the pressure of talking about Bugoma forest issues severally. Whenever arrested it is my property that is lost leaving my children suffering and after becoming poorer; you will



UGANDA POLICE POLICE FORM 18

RELEASE ON BOND (Section 1 (3) CR. PRO.CODE)

I, NKURUNZIZA DESIRE

Being charged with offence of INCITING VIOLENCE  
O.B No. 24/13/04/022 and after equipped to appear before the  
C.O. at KIKUUBE P/571

Do hereby bind myself to appear at KIKUUBE at 0900/C  
On the 19 day of APRIL 2022  
And continue to attend until otherwise by Court, further to answer the said charge.

Dated this 13 day of APRIL 2022

\* Nkurunziza Desire Signature

I hereby declare myself/our surety for the above named.  
We hereby declare ourselves and each of us sureties  
that he/she shall attend as above stated.

Dated this \_\_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_ 20\_\_\_\_

1. Name \_\_\_\_\_ Sign \_\_\_\_\_ Tel \_\_\_\_\_  
2. Name \_\_\_\_\_ Sign \_\_\_\_\_ Tel \_\_\_\_\_  
3. Name \_\_\_\_\_ Sign \_\_\_\_\_ Tel \_\_\_\_\_

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not talk about government anymore. When arrested they charge me with criminal tress pass and inciting violence," says Nkurunziza while holding a file containing court and police bond papers.

Nkurunziza reveals that out of the three case files that they opened against him, one has since been dismissed by the court in Hoima for failure of the state to present evidence against him.

However, her laments that the legal tactics employed by the forest destroyers and those in authority to silence him are an approach to make him poor.

"They arrest me from my area in Kikuube and from my home sometimes at night and the drive me to Hoima and on reaching there, a police file has been compiled and they take me to court where they remand me first before applying for bail," Nkurunziza cries.

He adds that after being released from prison, he again incur costs of travelling to and from Hoima to report to court in answering the bond which is another cost.

"After this meeting, I assure you we are going to start receiving telephone calls from the district but please publish this in your media

houses. They open files, with witness statements and by the time they come to arrest you, the file is ready for court and they take you direct to court," he says.

Nkurunziza a local council 1 chairperson of Nyairongo who also leads seven other villages claims that the forest (Bugoma) is full of soldiers and only those known or sent by known people like government officials are allowed to enter the forest as well as the agents who have security guarding them because they were given a job of collecting money and to sell (rent) plots in the forest.

He adds: "And we are worried now that some unscrupulous people are beginning to peoples' land that is adjacent to the forest reserve under the guise that they are encroaching on the forest reserve.

Lamula Asasira, a human rights activist and resident of Rwembaho says that upon the commencement of the destruction of Bugoma forest, women in the area are the most affected.

She says that the destruction of the reserve attracted many people from the different parts of the country who have destroyed the reserve while using the gun.

"What is most hurting to us is that they found us protecting this forest for years and we kept it well while working with NFA but it is now all sugar cane plantation and shambas for maize. If they find you passing by and or touching even suspecting that you are against the development, they will beat you badly and imprison you," says Lamula.

Environment activists under the Save Bugoma Forest Campaign have now asked the authorities in Kikuube District to stop intimidating environment activists.

"We have seen over the years, activists have been facing tramped up charges and some of them are in court and a number of cases staled at police with no investigations done," they said.



BY JALIRA NAMYALO

**E**nvironment activists have asked the government to rethink its position on the efforts against Bugoma Central Forest Reserve give away and land grab.

Under the Save Bugoma Forest Campaign, the activists say that the Bugoma forest boundary opening report does not seek to resolve the pending boundary verification exercises ordered by the cabinet to ensure the conservation of the forest.

The campaign consists of host communities, civil society and private sector entities whose main objective is to defend Bugoma Forest reserve from land grabbing, sugarcane growing, oil plates amongst others.

While commending the Bugoma forest boundary opening exercise, the activists say that the report falls short

## Bugoma forest survey report is mockery, says activists

of expectations and that it does not solve the protracted disputes on land but rather it seeks to validate the illegalities and land grabbing.

“We are dismayed that the report does not provide a definitive finding on whether Hoima sugar limited encroached on Bugoma CFR land instead it relies on illegally obtained certificates of titles, illegal Environmental Social Impact Assessment certificate issued by NEMA, the search statements from the lands registry, court judgements

that were issued to reach a finding that Hoima sugar is utilising land leased to it by the omukama of Bunyoro Kitara Kingdom without determining whether the land in question is within Bugoma CFR as gazetted areas,” said Mr Godfrey Twesigye, the Executive Director of Water and Environment Media Network, Uganda.

Twesigye asked the lands ministry and the surveyors to avail a conclusive finding on whether Hoima Sugar Limited encroached on Bugoma Central

Forest reserve land because the released report does not address that issue.

“The survey report must indicate the entire 41,142 hectares of Bugoma Forest reserve whether they are intact and if not the report should indicate where the land went, who owns it and how did they own it,” he demands.

The conservationists have asked the government to urgently address the gaps in the report and make positive recommendations for the conservation of Bugoma forest

reserve land.

They also tasked the surveyors to make a conclusive finding as per the terms of reference regarding Hoima Sugar Limited encroachment on Bugoma forest because the survey report does not address that issue.

“We note that a number of titles have been obtained, curved out from the forest reserve land without official parliamentary approval through de-gazetting of that forest. So we call upon the ministry of lands to cancel those titles. The report must show whether the forest still exist and if not, where is it and which part is still remaining,” says Twesigye.

He added: “We also seek to ask government to ensure that the habitation around Bugoma CFR is also preserved and provide guarantees that no further encroachment will do because it is key as a rain tropical forest.”

In November 2023, the minister of Lands, Housing and Urban Development, Judith Nabakooba forwarded the Bugoma forest survey report to the minister of Water and

Environment.

The report was prepared by the department of surveys and mapping following a 2019 cabinet directive tasking for the opening of the boundaries of Bugoma forest reserve and to determine whether Hoima Sugar Limited and other claimants encroached on the forest reserve.

The cabinet directive was seen as a measure to solve a protracted legal battle between NFA and the Omukama of Bunyoro-Kitara Kingdom jointly with Hoima Sugar and the Commissioner for land registration.

The cases are pending hearing and determination before the Court of Appeal.

In 2015 Bunyoro - Kitara Kingdom acquired a land title of 22 square miles within 3 days and leased that land to Hoima Sugar Limited which prompted National Forestry Authority (NFA) to file a case against the Omukama of Bunyoro-Kitara Kingdom, Hoima Sugar and the Commissioner for land registration.

The chairperson of the Save Bugoma Forest

”

**The survey report must indicate the entire 41,142 hectares of Bugoma Forest reserve whether they are intact and if not the report should indicate where the land went, who owns it and how did they own it..”**

Campaign, Dickens Kamugisha observes that all the problems affecting Bugoma Forest reserve happened when the commissioner for Surveys and Mapping went to court and testified against NFA that the contested land is outside the forest reserve hence the reason why NFA lost the case.

He says: “...together as Ugandans we can save Bugoma forest. We are going to make sure that we discuss, inform you of what we are going to be doing from now onwards to ensure that this forest is saved.”

Looking at this report, Kamugisha says it does not have any conclusion of what should

be done and yet the surveyors were tasked to do boundary opening and ensure that Bugoma forest reserve land is there.

“They have listed a number of customary claimants who were given land by the Bunyoro - Kitara Kingdom but the report does not explain how Bunyoro-Kitara Kingdom entered into the forest reserve to award more than 20 people hectares of land,” he adds.

According to Kamugisha, the leaked report is not explaining where the 1600 hectares are, to make it 39,492.620 hectares instead of the 41,142 hectares and what should be done to customary claimants who are occupying the forest land.

“If you look at this report, they tell you it was done by different stakeholders but the major ones they talk about are the Resident District Commissioners (RDCs) who have been harassing us and the communities that we cannot say anything. The District Police Commanders (DPCs) who have been arresting people including journalists and therefore they have been waiting this report for a specific purpose not for the public good,” he adds.

Kamugisha reveals: “We are again going to ask the communities to sign a petition to the president to clearly express our dissatisfaction with this report and demand that another independent surveyor carryout the survey with specific instructions to ensure that the report identifies the specific encroachment. We shall still engage the ministry of lands, ministry of water and environment and NFA to make sure that a few things positive in this report are implemented.”

jalirajuma@gmail.com



# Human activities causing hot temperatures - environmentalists

By JALIRA NAMYALO

**T**he current high temperatures have been attributed to human induced activities primarily driven by greenhouse gas emissions from burning fossil fuels, deforestation, encroachment on wetlands and peat lands as well as other industrial processes leading to air and water pollution.

Environmentalists say that human activities have significantly altered natural environments in all parts of the world which has contributed greatly to the stock of greenhouse gas emissions in the atmosphere.

They cite examples of releasing carbon dioxide when felling trees and methane from rice and livestock farming.

Jaliah Namubiru, the Programmes Officer at Environmental Management for Livelihood Improvement (EMLI) -Bwaise Facility says that human activities have limited the ability of natural systems to absorb and store or sequester carbon from the atmosphere and for natural features to protect

communities from the increasingly severe impacts of climate change.

She suggests for a collection of approaches that offer the potential to both reduce and remove emissions to play a crucial role in mitigating high temperatures and their associated impacts.

Namubiru suggests that there should be approaches that involve the protection, restoration and sustainable management of ecosystems to address societal challenges and that several actions can be taken to mitigate the impacts of high temperatures and combat climate change.

"Planting trees and restoring degraded forests can help sequester carbon dioxide from the atmosphere, reducing the greenhouse effect and mitigating climate change. Trees also provide shade and cool the surrounding environment through evapotranspiration," she says.

She calls for implementation of practices such as agroforestry, rotational grazing, and conservation

agriculture to improve soil health, increase carbon sequestration, and reduce land degradation thereby ultimately contributing to climate resilience.

Other measures is by increasing green spaces in urban areas through the establishment of parks, green roofs, and community gardens to mitigate the urban heat island effect, improve air quality, and enhance the overall well-being of urban residents.

"There is need to protect and restore natural habitats and preserving biodiversity to enhance ecosystem resilience to climate change impacts, as diverse ecosystems are better able to adapt to environmental changes. Implementing sustainable water management practices, such as watershed restoration and rainwater harvesting, can also help mitigate the impacts of droughts and water scarcity exacerbated by climate change," says Namubiru.

She guides that by engaging local communities in nature-based solutions

and providing education on the importance of ecosystem conservation and sustainable resource management can foster greater stewardship of natural resources and enhance resilience to climate change.

Anthony Wolimbwa, the National Coordinator of Climate Action Network, Uganda (CAN-U) says that the weather changes currently faced have coloration with the destruction of the natural reserves and the local environment.

"There is what we call the local climate which is determined by what is within your land; for example if you are near the forest reserve, the temperatures may be hot but the air is cool therefore when near the trees the temperatures are cooler. When you have a healthy eco-system, even if the climate system changes, the impact shall not be as it is now," he says.

Wolimbwa says that the entire globe has warmed up and the temperatures have gone up because of the destruction of the environment particularly loss of forest cover, wetlands and over consumption which is driving high level of industrialization that highly produce global warming gases.

Countries like Uganda back home, Wolimbwa says that they have also contributed by disposing the eco-system by largely occupying the forests, water bodies and wetlands and something people do not talk about the soil which has been completely disorganized on the majority of Uganda's vulnerable land. "Slight warming of temperatures is causing climate change."

"We are expecting hot temperatures these months of January to mid-March but their effects have exceeded because now we are receiving hot nights with less cold nights. This is attributed to our environment being highly depleted and poor environment governance which is an outcome of poor political governance in the country," he says.

Wolimbwa adds that: "If you want to know how the country is governed, you look at the environment because environment is the most poorly governed beat in the poorly governed states. Where governments are governing their countries well, their environments are responding well."

He adds: "Like for our country (Uganda), our state is poorly governed because there is poor enforcement of the laws, there is impunity, corruption and there is also lack of commitment from the political class to protect the environment which is the back bone of the economy. If you check on the figures, there is inflation because the environment is not doing well. If you look at Kampala now, there is no reason why people should construct houses without leaving compounds for trees and greening, there is no reason why Uganda National Roads Authority (UNRA) should construct roads without greening them either by use of grasses or approved trees."

Wolimbwa says that because of the decreasing area under urbanization especially in the central region and given the poor construction methods, lack of observance of greening

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If you want to know how the country is governed, you look at the environment because environment is the most poorly governed beat in the poorly governed states.



court, we have an increment in hot temperatures around Kampala and other areas, the temperatures have to automatically go up due to the concrete that is everywhere and there are lesser green belts.

The Executive Director of Civic Response on Environment and Development (CRED), Bashir Twesigye attributes the high temperatures to destruction of key natural reserves like forests and wetlands.

While citing examples, Twesigye says that Bugoma and Budongo forests are situated in the oil belt where oil exploration and development activities are taking place and that the two reserves and other critical ecosystems were cited as important environmental resources in what is described

as carbon sinks.

"The forests issue was factored into the initial plan of doing oil exploration and development where we have this intact natural resource in the oil area. It is really unfortunate that even before oil production commences, these resources are being destroyed and it sets off balance the Environmental and Social Impact Assessment (ESIA) that were done before the project. The destruction of the forest undermines the environmental plans for the oil project," he states.

According to Twesigye, the oil project is being developed in an environmentally stressed area because people cannot access water which they were accessing through rivers from the forests and rainfall supported by the forest.

"So the destruction of the forest means that people lose all the benefits and this happens at a time when the impacts of climate change are evident both in the nearby communities and in the cities and other parts of the country. They certainly no doubt that the heat waves we are facing, floods and the erratic rains will become worse," he adds.

Most surprising, Twesigye says that government has developed a project for tree planting in the Midwestern area at a cost of Shs70 billion.

He says that by planning for tree planting yet the country has an intact natural forest that is being destroyed, speaks to the incoherence that government planning in all that does not add up.

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BY JALIRA NAMYALO

**S**tate Minister for Lands, Dr Sam Mayanja is on spot for issuing orders allowing encroachers to possess three Central Forest reserves in Kayunga District without following the due process of the law.

The three forest reserves are Wamale, Kiwula and Bajjo forests.

In a March 5 2024 letter to Kayunga Resident District Commissioner, the minister directed that the population in 18 villages be provided with security for them to enjoy quiet possession of their purported bibanjas.

“That since in reality there is definitely no Bajjo forest, I directed that the population in the 18 villages be provided with appropriate security for them to enjoy quiet possession of their bibanja holding in accordance with Article 237(8) of the Constitution and Presidential directives of August 22, 2013, April 29, 2019 and February 28, 2022,” the minister wrote.

He indicated that the inhabitants already evicted should be helped by the government to be returned to the bibanja from which they had been evicted.

“I further directed that since the Wamale, Kiwula and Bajjo forests are still legally forest reserves, all the title deeds made thereon are void in accordance with section 59(1a) of the land Act as amended. The commissioner land registration is consequently directed to initiate the process of cancelling those titles pursuant to section 91 of the land Act,” reads Dr Mayanja’s letter.

The minister’s directives resulted from his February 29 2024 field visit to Kayunga District.

However, senior officials at



## Minister Mayanja on spot for allowing encroachers on forest

the National Forestry Authority (NFA) said that the minister’s letter and the earlier field visit were made without consultation with the authority, which is the custodian of the forests in the country.

Speaking on condition of anonymity, the officials said that the minister did not consult NFA yet he is not familiar with the matters relating to management of central forest reserves.

“It is unfortunate that the minister who should protect the government property is just giving them contrary to the directives. The purported bibanja owners have no legal

documents and the said land titles are illegal,” one of them said.

NFA legal manager, Moses Muhumuza says that despite the directive, NFA is not evicting people; “actually the people were found in forest reserve at the boundary opening and they requires to be allowed in the forest as licensees.

“NFA allowed the offers hence we are not evicting anybody. The forests talked of; a forest reserve does not mean trees alone but land reserved for forestry use and in that regard a forest reserve exists and it was gazetted to protect the

wood land, the grassland and it is a catchment area for River Sezibwa and the Nile. I disagree with the notion of the minister,” he says.

According to Muhumuza, the people in the forest reserve are licensees of NFA who are holding permits.

Muhumuza revealed that at Wamale forest, the land title of Anne Nsubuga was acquired by Moses Karangwa and it was sold to the Sugar Company.

“There is a syndicate by Karangwa. He acquired land titles in forest and sold them to companies. He is now rallying locals to claim that they are

being evicted. Karangwa is using the minister so that the sugar companies can take possession of the land. He is using a political move to push his agenda,” added Muhumuza saying that NFA is currently embroiled in several legal battles with the illegal title holders who are proxies of Karangwa, among them; Morgan Isingoma on land sold to Kiira motors and Kayunga sugar works.

### Minister’s letter

Dr Mayanja’s letter observed that 60 homesteads were under the threat of eviction by the proprietor, Ms Ann Nsubuga and he directed that she submits her proposal to the RDC’s office to sell her land to the government.

He also asked the RDC to evaluate the proposals and forward them to his office for consequential compensation arrangement by the Uganda Land Commission.

“I further directed that she (Nsubuga) should not interfere with the quiet possession of the bibanja holders on the land since the bibanja holders have security of occupancy guaranteed by the constitution under Article 237(8) and as directed by the president in his directives,” reads the minister’s directives.

The minister said that at Kataigwa village, he addressed a gathering of more than 2000 residents and in the presence of local leaders including area Member

### About the forest

Bajjo Forest was gazetted under Statutory Instrument No. 176 of 1968, covering 3,373 hectares and managed by NFA. The forest reserve was re-gazetted in 1998 by Statutory Instrument No. 63 of 1998. The National Forestry and Tree Planting Act No.8 of 2003 designed to safeguard defines such reserves as areas declared to be central forest reserves, not solely contingent on the presence of trees. The forest reserves also encompass grassy-woodland areas such as the cattle corridor utilized in Kayunga District where NFA has previously issued grazing permits.

The Forest reserves serves as a catchment for Rivers Ssezibwa and Nile, flowing into Lake Kyoga, Bajjo Central Forest Reserve is also designated for industrial plantations.

of Parliament, Charles Tebandeke, the chairmen of the local councils and other opinion leaders.

“Wamale and Kiwula forests covering 30 square miles have been completely wiped out by sugarcane estates. This is the responsibility of the NFA. However the environmental Protection Police (EPP) should be replaced by the local security under the direction of the District security committee. The forests are no longer in existence for the EPP to guard. All the 30 square miles are covered by sugarcane estates with mature sugarcanes being harvested,” reads the minister’s letter.

### Environment minister responds

In response to Dr Mayanja’s directives, his counterpart in the Water and Environment, Beatrice Anywar (state for environment) said that NFA has grappled with encroachment, involving illegal cultivation, cattle grazing, illicit forest produce harvesting, and unauthorized and illegal titling of the Forest Reserve land which has sometimes culminated into Court action against the NFA.

She said that the illegal and unauthorized titling of the Forest Reserves in Kayunga District primarily results from actions of Kayunga District Land Board (KDLB) in collusion with the respective Area Land Committees (ALC) in which the forest reserves are situated.

“In June 2021, Morgan Isingoma with financing from Kiira Motors Limited obtained illegal land titles within Bajjo Central Forest Reserve. Subsequently, the illegal titles were transferred to Kiira Motors Limited, aiding Morgan in compensating the cattle grazers within the forest to facilitate acquisition of the land. Upon NFA’s discovery of this situation, attempts were made to engage Kiira Motors in opening the acquired titles and the forest to avert anticipated disputes but unfortunately this effort was not realized,” Minister Anywar wrote.

According to the environment minister, undeterred, NFA continued to proactively open the boundaries of the forest reserve to prevent encroachment and in response to NFA’s persistent protective measures; Morgan swiftly filed Court Civil Suit No.154 of 2021 in the High Court of Uganda at

Mukono. The suit seeks to declare NFA a trespasser on the forest land and half NFA mandate on the forest reserve.

The minister also indicates that on September 1, 2023, Kayunga Sugar Works Limited initiated Civil Suit No.201 of 2023 in the High Court of Uganda at Mukono against the NFA seeking for court assistance to claim possession of the forest reserve.

The case is seeking for declarations that NFA is a trespasser on forest reserve land that has been illegally titled by the Sugar Company.

“After numerous efforts by Kayunga Sugar Works to claim the forest reserve, additional individuals attempted illegal possession of the land. This compelled the Authority to intensify forest boundary patrols leading to the arrest of 9 suspects on January 19, 2024 and January 21 under Police references REF:03/19/01/24 and REF:03/21/01/24 respectively.”

She said that investigations are currently underway for the criminal cases with a perspective towards prosecution while simultaneous civil cases are in the process of litigation in the High Court of Uganda at Mukono.

#### Interventions:

The minister said that NFA has actively involved the local community, leaders and the district security committee to restore the integrity of the Central Forest Reserves.

In June 2021, through collaborative efforts with the community and leaders, NFA delineated the boundaries of Bajjo Forest marking them with concrete pillars.

“...the NFA granted licenses to commercial tree farmers and communities adjoining the forest reserve under collaborative Forest Management (CFM). This initiative aims to facilitate tree plantation development, ensuring both conservation and protection of the forest reserve while allowing communities to benefit,” reads the minister’s letter.

NFA continuously detects numerous illegal land titles within the Forest Reserves in Kayunga. Complaints have been formally lodged with the Ministry of Lands, Housing and Urban Development, urging thorough investigations and subsequent cancellation of the contested titles.

Anywar says that some local communities previously benefiting from grazing in the Forest Reserves have been influenced by certain politicians not to transition from grazing to tree planting but nonetheless, several community members have already embraced the offers for tree planting and are in the process of initiating tree-planting activities.

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Titles in Central Forest Reserves in Kayunga District				
No.	Name	Plot	Block	Forest Reserve
1	Morgan Isingoma sold to Kira Motors Corporation	2	160	Bajo Central Forest Reserve
2	Morgan Isingoma sold to Kira Motors Corporation	3	160	Bajo Central Forest Reserve
3	Morgan Isingoma sold to Kira Motors Corporation	4	160	Bajo Central Forest Reserve
4	Wonderful Property Consult Ltd	9	160	Bajo Central Forest Reserve
5	Wonderful Property Consult Ltd	8	160	Bajo Central Forest Reserve
6	Wonderful Property Consult Ltd	7	160	Bajo Central Forest Reserve
7	Wonderful Property Consult Ltd	6	160	Bajo Central Forest Reserve
8	Wonderful Property Consult Ltd	4	160	Bajo Central Forest Reserve
9	Wonderful Property Consult Ltd	2	160	Bajo Central Forest Reserve
10	Wonderful Property Consult Ltd	2	157	Bajo Central Forest Reserve
11	Wonderful Property Consult Ltd	2	159	Bajo Central Forest Reserve
12	Ssemuga Badiru	9	14	Kiula Central Forest Reserve
13	Katende Peter	16	155	Wamale Central Forest Reserve
14	Katende Peter	15	155	Wamale Central Forest Reserve
15	Katende Peter	2	155	Wamale Central Forest Reserve
16	Baduzi Yahaya	44	156	Wamale Central Forest Reserve
17	Baduzi Yahaya	8	156	Wamale Central Forest Reserve
18	Kayunga sugar works	1	151	Bajo Central Forest Reserve
Court Cases affecting Central Forest Reserves in Kayunga District				
	Parties	Case Number	Forest Reserve	
1	National Forestry Authority Versus Ssemuga Badru	C.S No.102 of 2019	Kiula Central Forest Reserve	
2	Modern Agri Infra Ltd Versus National Forestry Authority	C.S No.214 of 2021	Bajo and Kiula Central Forest Reserves	
3	Modern Agri Infra Ltd Versus National Forestry Authority	C.S No.18 of 2020	Bajo and Kiula Central Forest Reserves	
4	Kajeke Wilfred and Wonderful Properties Consults Ltd Versus National Forestry Authority	C.S No.114 of 2018	Bajo Central Forest Reserve	
6	Isingoma Morgan Versus National Forestry Authority	C.S No.154 of 2021	Bajo Central Forest Reserve	
7	Baduzi Yahaya Versus National Forestry Authority	C.S No.88 of 2017	Bajo Central Forest Reserve	
8	Kayunga Sugar Works Ltd Versus National Forestry Authority	C.S No.201 of 2023	Bajo Central Forest Reserve	



In our next edition we focus on wildlife trafficking and behind the scenes in the killing of lions.