



# Environmental Justice in Uganda: A Reality or a Myth?

*An investigative study on the state of environmental justice in Uganda*



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2022 USAID/ Civil Society Strengthening Activity GUIDE Fellow

September 2022



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This study was undertaken by Edward Serucaca Jnr, a 2022 USAID/ Civil Society Strengthening Activity (CSSA) GUIDE Fellow.

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## About the Study

This study was conceptualised and undertaken by Edward Serucaca, a 2022 USAID/CSSA GUIDE Fellow. The research was supported through the 2022 GUIDE Fellowship program funded by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) through the Civil Society Strengthening Activity (CSSA) programme, implemented by the East West Management Institute (EWMI), in partnership with Development Network of Indigenous Voluntary Associations (DENIVA), the International Center for Not-for-Profit Law (ICNL) and Common Ground Consulting (CGC).

## **Environmental Justice in Uganda: Reality or Myth?** *An Investigative Study on the State of Environmental Justice in Uganda*



## Acknowledgment



Over the past one year, I have had the privilege to participate in the inaugural GUIDE program fellowship under the USAID/CSSA activity. GUIDE is a servant leadership program that creates opportunities for thoughtful collaboration and mentorship, provides much needed practical leadership training, and brings social change leaders together to tackle difficult issues within Uganda's civil society sector. In essence it's been my "GUIDE" for discovering some of my most hidden leadership potential. Sessions carefully curated by Mr. Craig Bowman a leading leadership coach, not only expanded my knowledge, but also stimulated my most reflective critical thinking.

As a GUIDE fellow, I proposed an investigative study on climate and environment, a subject that's close to my heart. For the last 10 years, I have worked at the centre of protection of Human Rights Defenders (HRDs) in Uganda working on a wide range of thematic issues. I have seen first-hand the challenges HRDs working on the Environment confront on a daily basis. When the opportunity to undertake an activity under the fellowship opened up, I was inspired to pursue an Environmental Justice study. Globally, the environment is coming under increasing pressure and so is it locally in Uganda. We must do all we can to push back and reverse the worrying trend.

I am grateful to the 107 respondents who made this study possible: Human Rights Defenders, Development partners, representatives from Government Institutions and Multi-nationals firms. They lent us their time and shared their knowledge and recounted their experiences working towards achieving Environment Justice. I am deeply grateful to individual HRDs that sincerely shared their personal stories. These lived realities give us the impetus to shape an on-going conversation on some of these findings for which the Green Deal<sup>1</sup> has been birthed.

I would like to thank my longstanding colleague, Masake Anthony who was on hand to support the research in more ways than one while I transitioned to South Sudan. I am also thankful to Fern Teodoro who identified and believed in my positive participation in the GUIDE program. Fern equally took time to review and provide resourceful feedback on the study. Catherine Kanabahita whose guidance across the year has been helpful. Robert R. Kirenga who graciously recommended me for the program while I worked as the Advocacy and Networking officer at the National Coalition of Human Rights Defenders-Uganda. My colleagues within the inaugural cohort for freely and genuinely sharing their experiences- I remain grateful. In a special way I pay immeasurable recognition to my partner Alison Kwikiriza Serucaca who stands with me in these career changing moments.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Edward Serucaca Jnr.", written over a white background.

Edward Serucaca Jnr.

**2022 USAID/Civil Society Strengthening Activity GUIDE Fellow**

## Foreword

The USAID/Uganda Civil Society Strengthening Activity (CSSA) is a 5-year USAID funded activity that supports the capacity strengthening of Uganda civil society organisations (CSOs) across 12 districts to influence and contribute to their improved development outcomes in four thematic areas; health with particular attention paid to achieving Uganda's HIV/AIDS reduction goals; education, youth and child development, agriculture and food security, and democracy, rights and governance.

On the 21<sup>st</sup> January, 2022, the USAID/CSSA funded Civil Society Strengthening Activity launched a unique leadership training program titled, "Giving Rise to Ugandan Indigenous Direction and Experience" (GUIDE).

The inaugural cohort has been engaged in intense virtual sessions and 360 degrees leadership programs to hone the skills of the fellows in leadership. GUIDE was founded by CSSA's implementing partner, Common Ground Consulting.

Structurally, GUIDE is borne out of a servant leader paradigm in service of a goal that transcends personal interests and the fellows in one way or another are representative of that ideal and passion. Edward Serucaca is one of our fellows who has been instrumental in the inaugural cohort.

As his fellowship project, Edward opted to undertake an investigative study on the state of Environmental Justice in Uganda as his practical activity towards obligations for the fellowship. As a leader, Edward realised the need to explore the state of Environmental Justice with the view of proposing recommendations towards addressing this issue. Beyond the fellowship, Edward has engineered a platform to continue the conversation on Environmental Justice which to us is a pro-active way to offer leadership where it matters. We are all currently affected by the global environmental crises taking different shape.

We congratulate the fellow on this publication.

Yours,

*Fern Teodoro*

Fern Teodoro  
Chief of Party  
**USAID/Uganda Civil Society Strengthening Activity (CSSA)**

## 1. INTRODUCTION

### 1.1. Background

“

“For the first time in its history, the United Nations has recognized that everyone, everywhere, has the right to live in a clean, healthy and sustainable environment. Resolutions from the Human Rights Council in 2021 (A/HRC/RES/48/13) and the General Assembly in 2022 (A/RES/76/300) add this fundamental human right to the library of internationally recognized rights. As humanity confronts an unprecedented planetary crisis, it is our genuine hope that the right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment will serve as a catalyst for systemic and transformative changes to produce a just and sustainable future in harmony with nature.” states David R Boyd UN Special Rapportuer on the Environment

”

Climate change<sup>2</sup> is a major threat to human existence as we know it. From the significant shifts in daily weather patterns rising temperatures around the globe, and the erratic nature of seasons, we are all experiencing the manifestations of climate change more often. Researchers and scholars agree that human activity is the leading cause of current climate change and have identified the burning of fossil fuels, deforestation, and agriculture and farming, including cattle keeping, as the main drivers. These activities contribute a rise in greenhouse gases in the atmosphere, which blanket the earth and prevent the sun's heat from escaping into space – a phenomenon known as the 'greenhouse effect.' The expansion of the greenhouse effect leads to global warming and, over time, climate change.

In Uganda, the impacts of climate change are largely experienced through extreme and devastating weather events like floods, droughts, landslides, high temperatures, and crop failure, among others. Most recently, two rivers burst their banks after heavy rainfall and led to severe flooding, leaving homes, shops and roads submerged and other infrastructure destroyed. In the end, at least 26 people were killed. The flooding took place in Mbale and surrounding districts, some 220 kilometers east of the capital, Kampala. Notably<sup>3</sup>, following torrential rains that pounded the area, parts of Eastern Uganda experienced floods and landslides, specifically the districts around the Mt. Elgon region including Mbale, Kapchorwa, Bulambuli, Namisindwa, Sironko, Manafwa and the surrounding areas. So far in 2022<sup>4</sup>, 92,444 individuals have been affected by disasters, representing 19,079 households. A total of 13,451 individuals representing 4,170 households have been internally displaced largely in Uganda's Elgon region. In the Rwenzori sub-region, rivers have repeatedly overflowed their banks as a result of heavy rains. Even the capital Kampala often experiences potentially dangerous flash floods in areas that have poor drainage channels.

These concerning trends are being recorded amidst a rise in uncontrolled depletion of crucial natural environmental resources and a rise in activities that contribute to climate change. From 2001 to 2021, Uganda lost 967kha of tree cover, equivalent to a 12% decrease in tree cover since 2000, and 438Mt of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions<sup>5</sup>. In the Adjumani district, the plunder of Zoka Central Forest Reserve is in its advanced stages. Zoka Forest is a natural tropical rain forest in the Northern Region of Uganda. The forest is a component of the larger East Moyo Wildlife Reserve. The 1259-hectare natural forest is an important rain catchment and home to the endangered *Azelia Africana* tree species. It is being destroyed by illegal loggers and charcoal burners and a developer has recently set up a petrol station inside the forest



reserve<sup>6</sup>. In mid-Western Uganda, the controversial giveaway of square miles of land in the Bugoma Central Forest Reserve<sup>7</sup> to Hoima Sugar Limited to cultivate sugarcane remains a matter of public concern. The Mabira Central Forest Reserve, a rainforest area covering about 30,000 hectares has also not been spared. In Kampala, Mbale and other parts of the country, the reclamation of wetlands and other catchment areas, without transparent Environmental Impact Assessments is cause for further concern.

These unchecked developments as we continue to see are contributing to the extreme weather events in Uganda and have an impact on communities, whose livelihoods depend on the existence of ecosystems and the preservation of nature's bounty. Environmental justice requires that these impacted communities are meaningfully consulted and involved in the decision-making processes in a fair, respectful, transparent, and accountable manner. This investigative study seeks to understand the extent to which Environmental human rights defenders<sup>8</sup> understand the fundamental aspects of environmental justice and the level of realisation of said standards. The goal

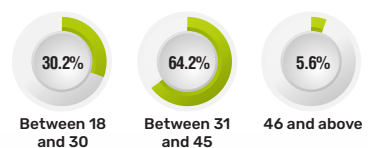
is to contribute towards an environment justice-centred governance approach.

## 1.2. Methodology

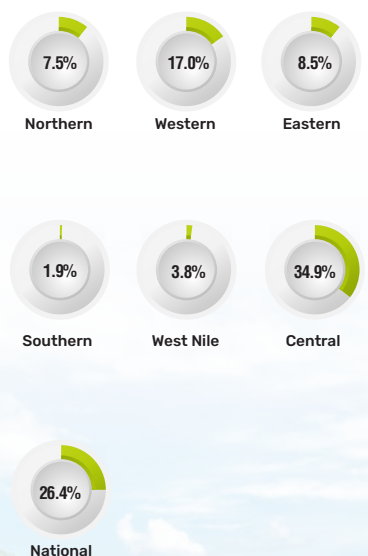
The researcher adopted a qualitative research approach for this study. At the onset, literature review was conducted to establish background information and the theoretical underpinnings of the investigation. A review of publicly available literature on climate change and environmental justice was conducted to appraise coverage on the subjects.

Key Informant Interviews were conducted in-person and online using a Google Form. In total, 107 respondents responded to the interviews, of which 55.1% were male and 44.9% female. The respondents were representative of environmental human rights defenders from all parts of the country. In terms of demographics, the majority of the respondents were between the ages of 31 and 45 years, representing 64.5% of the sample. The second most represented constituent in terms of age were young people aged between 18 and 30 who represented 29.9% of the sample.

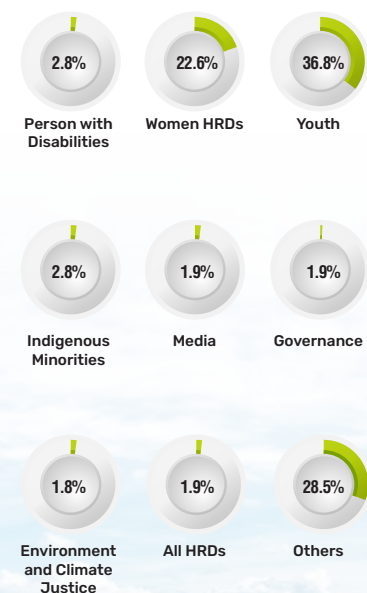
**Age Group** Study distribution (n=106)



**Areas** Study distribution (n=106)



**Thematic Group** Study distribution (n=106)





No respondent was paid to participate in the research. The information obtained was voluntary in nature and the information obtained was strictly used for the purposes of this study. The respondents were further asked if they are comfortable with their identity being disclosed in this study and any disclosures in this study adhered to this privacy standard. Respondents representing multi-national agencies and government MDAs opted to remain anonymous to freely express themselves on the issue.

### 1.3. Theoretical Underpinnings

Environmental justice means the fair treatment and meaningful involvement of all people regardless of race, colour, national origin, or income with respect to the development, implementation and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations and policies. The element of “fair treatment” seeks to evenly spread the negative environmental repercussions while “meaningful involvement” seeks to ensure that impacted communities are consulted and involved in the decision-making processes about environmental issues.<sup>9</sup>

The 1995 Constitution of Uganda (as amended)<sup>10</sup> provides a legal framework for environmental justice. Under the National Objectives and Directive Principles of State Policy, the state is required to protect important natural resources, including land, water, wetlands, minerals, oil, fauna and flora on behalf of the people of Uganda and to take all practical measures to promote good water management at all levels, and in the event of

natural disasters.

Under Objective 27, the state is further required to promote sustainable development and public awareness of the need to manage land, air, and water resources in a balanced and sustainable manner for the present and future generations. In the utilisation of the natural resources, the state is required to protect the development and environmental needs of present and future generations of Ugandans and in particular, to take all possible measures to prevent or minimise damage and destruction to land, air and water resources resulting from pollution or other causes. The Constitution guarantees the rational use of natural resources in a way that safeguards and protects the biodiversity of Uganda. Article 39 provides for the right of every Ugandan to a clean and healthy environment.

In other enabling Articles, the Constitution further provides for a legal foundation that guarantees fair treatment and meaningful involvement in the management of the environment as envisaged in environmental justice. For instance, several Articles guarantee the inherent nature of fundamental rights and freedoms, freedom of speech and expression which includes freedom of the press and other media, freedom to assemble and to demonstrate together with others peacefully and unarmed and to petition, freedom of association, right of access to information, civic rights and activities, and equality before and under the law.






## 2. STUDY FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS


### 2.1. Understanding of the concept of “environmental justice”

During the study, the respondents were invited to describe what they understood by the phenomenon “environmental justice”. Most of the respondents demonstrated a good understanding of the concept. Several core aspects of environmental justice were mentioned, including, the protection of the community, interdependence of the species, participatory decision making and accountability, community shared usage and benefits of nature, human regenerative use of the environment, ethical and responsible use of land, ecological unity and interdependence of all species, freedom of ecological destruction, and sacredness of the earth and the environment.

Human rights lawyer, Andrew Karamagi, defined environmental justice to mean:

 *“The judicious utilisation of natural resources in a way that ensures or strives towards equitable benefit for all members of a given community or society. Suffice to say, this is not an area of my competence or day-to-day work; I have learnt about it from my individual (casual) reading.”*

William Leslie Amanzuru, an environmental human rights defender and team leader of Friends of Zoka, emphasised the concept of equity and informed awareness as key elements of environmental justice.


 *“Environmental justice is equal and meaningful understanding and involvement of all people in addressing environmental concerns, regardless of any varying opinions in politics, religion, culture, race, color, and others with respect to regulations and enforcement of regulations of developmental ideas. It must take into account the principles of Equity.”*

On his part, Victor Ochen, the United Nations Global Goals Ambassador for Peace and the Founding Director of the African Youth Initiative Network (AYINET), noted that environmental justice is, “about using environment so caringly in a way that appreciates and benefit nature and humanity.”

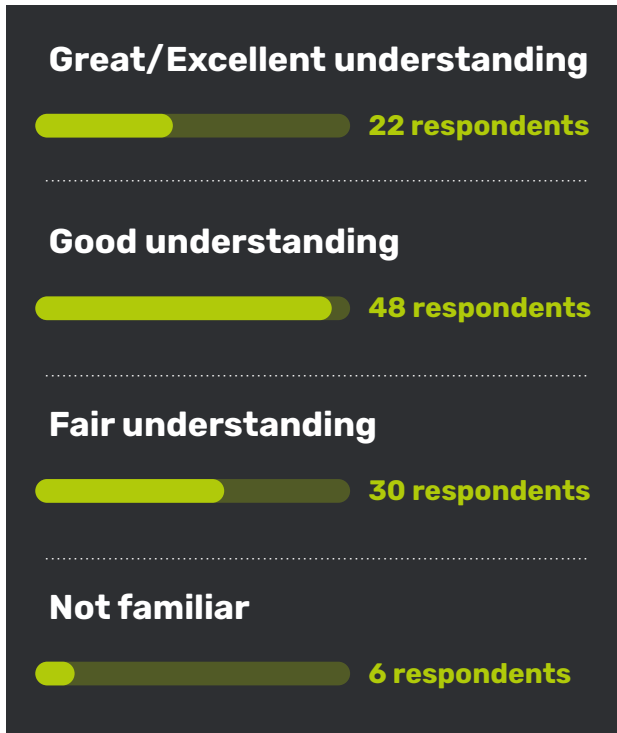
Brendah Akankunda of the Southern and Eastern Africa Trade, Information and Negotiations Institute (SEATINI Uganda), defined the concept as, “the fair utilization of the environment to promote a clean, safe and healthy community inclusive of the people, natural resources and the eco system.”

Tabitha Netuwa, a Senior Protection Officer working with Defend Defenders observed that environmental justice is the, “equitable and fair inclusion and treatment of everyone regardless of differences in race, status, nationality in enforcement of laws and regulations regarding the environment.”

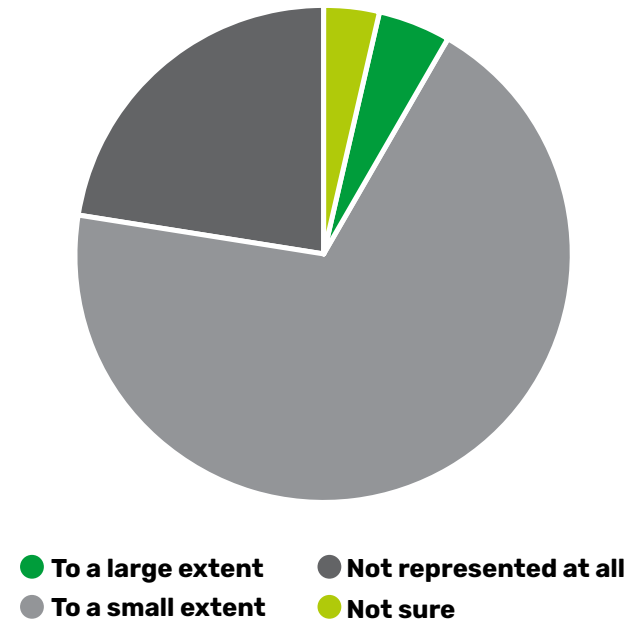
Human rights lawyer Kiiza Eron defined environmental justice as follows:

 *“Environmental justice is about ensuring that human rights, human dignity, fairness and equity underpin environmental governance so that sustainable development is achieved and degraders of the environment are held accountable.”*

Clarity about what environmental justice means is important in shaping the approach and initiatives that environmental defenders pursue in Uganda. The study reveals a good understanding which is critical.



### Level of representation in the decision-making process in environmental issues



## 2.2. Level of representation in decision-making processes

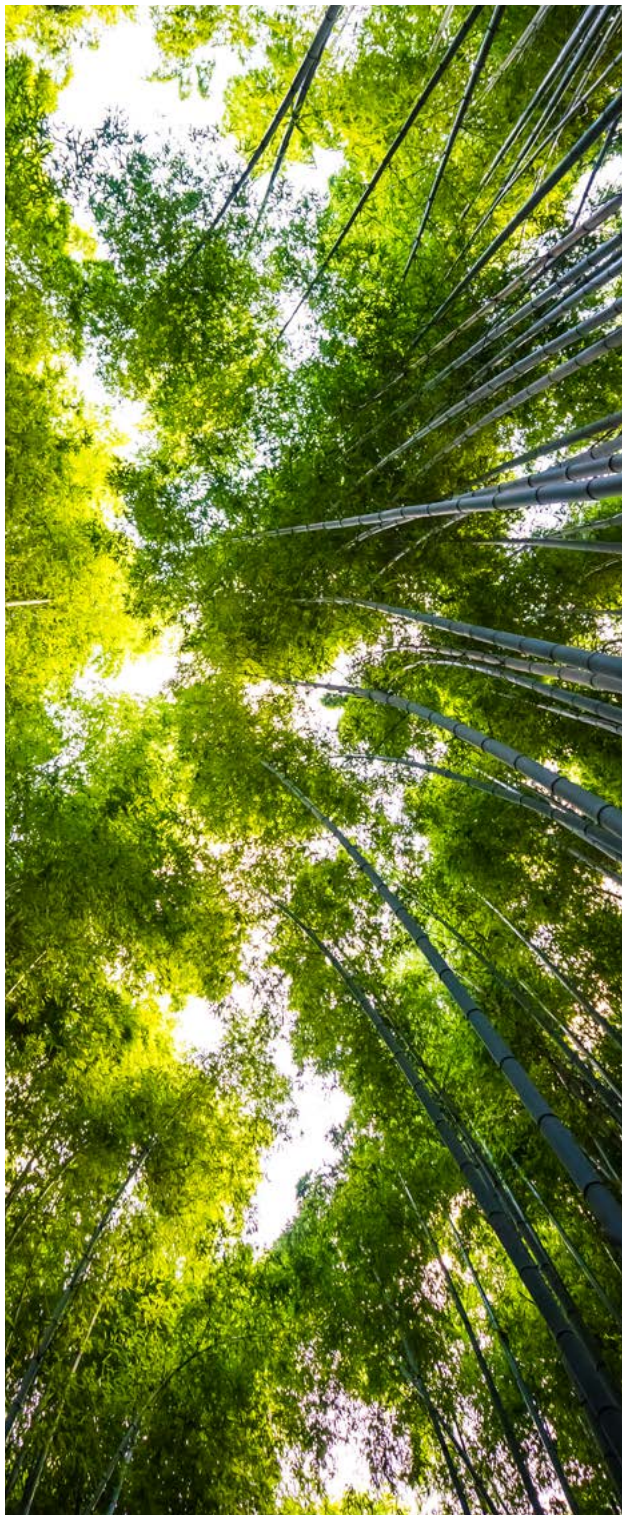
The first pillar of assessing the state of environmental justice in Uganda was the assessment of the extent to which impacted communities were represented in the decision-making processes on environmental issues. The pillar entails representation in elective positions and in decision-making meetings. The end goal of this representation is to ensure that the voices of impacted communities are heard and considered, which would provide clarity on the concerns, proposals, recommendations and community positions on environmental issues.

During the study, the respondents were asked to rate, according to their lived experiences and perceptions, the level at which impacted communities are represented in the decision-making process on environmental issues in their communities. In this context, impacted communities refer to people or communities that would be impacted by the environmental decision.

The findings reveal that the majority of the respondents at 66.4% believe that the impacted communities are represented in the decision-making process in environmental issues “to a small extent” while the second largest percentage of 21.5% represents respondents who believe that the impacted communities are “not represented at all”. Only 8.4% noted that the impacted communities are consulted “to a large extent” while 3.7% noted that they are “not sure” about the situation.

The respondents were invited to explain their scores and describe the ways in which representation happens in their areas of operation. Human rights lawyer Kiiza Eron observes that,

*“representation can be political through elected leaders, popular - directly through community meetings/consultation, or civic through civil society organization-led interactions with both communities and power players. Representation should be meaningful, adequate and effective.”*



The respondents that ranked the level of representation at “small extent” offered a number of explanations. For example, human rights lawyer Andrew Karamagi observed:

*“Existing interventions to ensure community representation and participation are led primarily by Community-Based Organisations and a few NGOs, whose footprint and reach is limited to a modest number of households. This kind of participation is enabled through regular interfaces with elected leaders and representatives at the local (ward, parish, and county) levels. This was most recently conducted with market women in Binga, Matebeleland, and Southeastern Zimbabwe<sup>11</sup>.”*

On his part, award-winning environmental human rights defender William Leslie Amanzuru raised concern about lack of meaningful representation in the decision-making processes:


*“Most times, decisions are imposed on the communities as opposed to being debated by the same communities, this makes them look more like imported ideas than sourced ideas from within. Communities are always served with options arrived at by those that do not partake of the realities that the decisions tend to address.”*

Annet Lekuru, a woman human rights defender and Founding Director of Feminature Uganda reiterated similar concerns as espoused by William. There is limited meaningful representation.


*“The communities are often involved after decisions have been made, a move meant to rubber-stamp irregular and non-participatory decisions of the power actors at any given time. It is no wonder, the community does not buy-in to these decisions in the end because they do not understand what decisions were made and how they were made, let alone, why.”*



Angwech Pamela Judith, the winner of the EU Human Rights Defenders Award 2017 and the founding Director of the Gulu Women's Economic Development & Globalization (GWED-G), expressed concern with the fact the leaders who are supposed to be engaging the impacted communities to ensure meaningful representation are the same people implicated in illegal logging and other crimes against the environment.

 *"In Northern Uganda, in areas where logging is a major commercial activity, environmental destruction is commonplace, especially because it is a core component of survival. Despite civil society advocacy works and putting in place ordinances, the states and local government leaders are involved in destroying environment hence their roles to re-enforce policy implementation is limited by minimum involvement of communities because they see that as sources of income."*

Pamela's concerns are supported by Tabitha Netuwa's observations.

 *"I haven't researched into this, but based on observation, listening to the news and people's opinions, there is barely any involvement e.g, the recent floods in Mbale where government approved structures built in wetlands were affected. The population living there had not been consulted."*

Robert R. Kirenga, the Executive Director of the National Coalition of Human Rights Defenders Uganda (NCHRDU) observed that


 *"The most affected are never considered as key stakeholders and are often used and abused by those in authority."*

In an interview, Hussein Kato Muyinda noted that:


 *"The impacted communities are not represented, decisions are made in boardrooms and forcefully implemented. The most current example is the Bugoma forest incident, where a sugar factory was given land that is part of the forest. The project started yet the communities were not consulted and the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) processes were not followed."*

The respondents also provided reasons as to why the level representation of impacted communities in the decision-making process is low.


Rebecca Karagwa a feminist and Human Rights lawyer observes that limited awareness about environmental justice among the people who are part of the impacted communities is affecting the level of representation.

 *"People who are directly affected by climate change are not involved in different processes and spaces where discussions on the same take place. Secondly, most of these people don't understand the language around climate change or any other environmental protection concerns. And that's why in my opinion, people who are enlightened must commit to self-transformation, e.g, some elites in the central region where I live are still seen dumping waste through car windows. Recently, I watched a BBC report by Nancy Kacungira where, a Ugandan was explaining the different types of winds in the local language, how they are identified, etc. Government should therefore invest resources in hearing these people out; if it requires translation or anything that can elevate their engagement, it should be done. That's how we can have meaningful engagement and inclusion that will restore and save the environment."*

Alex Martin Musiime, a human rights lawyer explained his observation that the representation is to a small extent because of limited voices of women at the decision-making tables.


 *“Communities that are at the nexus between the environment they interact with a daily and the decision makers are rarely involved in decision-making. Women form a large part of this group that is traditionally never allowed to be part of the decision making process yet they deal with the land, the waters, the air daily. In fact in most parts of the country, environmental issues are never discussed in local councils simply because the primary victims of any environmental change are never in those rooms.”*

Donaldson Ogira, a human rights defender and Founding Director of the Youth Forum for Social Justice that is based in Abim district points to a dysfunction in the representation chain. Despite impacted communities electing their representatives in local elections, they still struggle to get their views heard.


 *“The community I represent are underprivileged yet they have elected leaders to represent their views and opinions on how they wish to be governed, unfortunately, these leaders have hitherto failed to meaningfully engage their communities in the decision-making processes, hence leaving my community as one of the poorly governed.”*

Impacted communities are not the only ones shut out of the decision-making process, human rights defenders who play an important role of amplifying the voices of the impacted communities are also hardly consulted in meaningful ways as valued partners. Instead, they are often looked at as noise makers and agents of foreign interests. This hinders their ability to increase the levels of representation of the impacted communities.

Dorothy Kiyai, the Protection Officer at the NCHRDU emphasises this concern.

 *“HRDs are not involved at all in any decision-making process. They are not consulted or seen as stakeholders in any decision making process. Often, they get reports from the affected communities, media or are victims themselves in the process. Some have had an opportunity to study or work in that area. In Kayabwe, Mpigi district, a wetland was handed over to an investor without consulting the communities. In Karamoja, no consultations are made with communities. Rather, the land is cordoned off, and mining takes place without consideration of the people. In Mbale, it was shared that the allocation of the swampy area where Sino company conducts operations has led to the spate of fatal floods. Worth pointing out as well is Zoka Forest in West Nile where the communities have been affected by the cutting down of trees, illegal gazettement of protected areas, and the deployment of security personnel, contrary to their mandates.”*

In an interview with Dr. Katja Kerschbaumer, she cited gaps in knowledge and awareness as a reason communities are closed out of some of these decision making processes:

 *“impacted communities often do not have the legal (and other) knowledge to respond effectively to injustices. this is a question of education, sensitization, provision of (high quality) legal aid. Knowledge of lawyers on fundamental rights e.g. expropriation or that fundamental rights should ideally only be limited by decisions of courts and not mere administrative decisions”*



### 2.3. Level of participation in decision making and planning processes

This second critical element of environmental justice is the right to participate in the decision-making and planning processes on environmental issues in a fair and meaningful manner. Participation rights include the freedom to exercise the freedoms of expression including press freedom, association and peaceful assembly. It also entails the right of access to information and the right to know.

During the study, the respondents were invited to score on whether impacted communities have an opportunity to participate in decision making and planning processes in a fair, transparent and

#### Level of participation in decision-making and planning processes on environmental issues



- To a large extent
- To a small extent
- Not Involved at all
- Not sure

accessible manner.

The findings revealed that respondents believe that most impacted communities participate in decision-making and planning processes in environmental issues “to a small extent” at 62.6%. 16.8% of the respondents observed that the communities are “not involved in the processes at all.” A similar score of 16.8% of the respondents noted that the communities have an opportunity to participate “to a large extent.” 3.7% of the respondents were not sure about the level of participation in their communities.

In the interview with an employee of a company that works in the oil and extractives sector, the employee argued that impacted communities do have an opportunity to participate in the decision-making and planning processes. The employee observed:

*“The impacted communities are engaged through regular stakeholder engagement, through assessments, through proactive company activities such as planned site visits to engage communities, through the company grievance redress mechanisms which works with the Resettlement Planning Committees at every subcounty (RPC) and District Resettlement Committee (DIRCO) in Buliisa to address community concerns. Important to note is that the RPCs and the DIRCO have community representatives.”*

However, as noted from the scores above, most of the respondents engaged for this investigative



study note that the impacted communities are only able to exercise their right to participate in the decision-making and planning processes to a small extent. Through the responses it becomes evident that there are three main factors impacting the level and quality of participation;


- (i) impacted communities are not invited to participate;
- (ii) the communities lack an understanding of their rights and/ or the technicalities involved in the issue; and
- (iii) institutional mechanisms needed for involvement are absent.

### **2.3.1 Impacted Communities are purposefully excluded from fair and meaningful participation in the decision making and planning processes**

Many respondents suggested that communities are rarely given access to participate in decision-making and/or planning process for environmental issues, and if included, they are not invited to participate in the early stages of process or given an opportunity to participate in a meaningful way. William Leslie Amanzuru of Friends of Zoka operating in West Nile sub-region observed:


*"Often, our communities are not involved in problem identification, mapping, and prioritization. Thus they have limited access to decision-making spaces. This gives them a small marginal opportunity to participate."*

In another example, John Robert Turyakira, the Deputy Executive Director of Environmental Shield noted,

 *"in the case of Bugoma Forest (giveaway), only one consultative meeting was conducted during the Environmental Impacted Assesments. This in my view was not sufficient. Project Affected Persons (PAPs) need to fully participate not only in preliminary stages but also in the entire implementation of the project and*

*must be made aware of both social and environmental effects of the project."*


Similar concerns are observed by Angwech Pamela from GWED-G. She observed:

 *"There is no direct involvement of local communities unless spearheaded by CSOs. Secondly, the current local leaders and councilors have limited understanding of environmental justice programing and mainstreaming processes. Otherwise, they should ideally be better placed to roll out protection and advocacy work on environment through established committees."*

Respondents noted that there is also limited consultation during the legislative process on laws that are critical for the environment. Policy and research advocate Brighton Abaho observed:

*"The affected communities are not widely consulted on what they think such that they can give views. An example is the recently enacted EACOP<sup>12</sup> Bill which was passed into law, without adequate consultation. Even in Parliament, the Bill was not widely debated as expected, because the Executive had interests in the Bill. Views presented in the political opposition's minority report were not given ample consideration."*

Several tactics are used to minimize the participation of impacted communities and the people who defend them. Human rights defenders and their constituents who are part of the impacted communities often face intimidation and threats if they insist on exercising their participation rights as provided under the law. Human rights lawyer Alex Martin Musiime notes,


 *"the impacted communities are rarely involved. When they raise their voices, they are met with brute force. However, CSOs are remedying this by highlighting their voices and concerns to the powers that be."*

### **2.3.2 Impacted communities require more technical knowledge and a better understanding of their rights to participate in the decision-making and planning processes on environmental issues in a fair and meaningful manner**


In some cases, it is a lack in understanding that presents an obstacle to meaningful participation. Annet Lekuru of Feminature Uganda observed that even when the impacted community is involved, participation is not based on sufficient understanding of the core environmental issues at stake, thus limiting the ability of communities to make informed decisions in terms of appreciating what is at stake vis-à-vis the prospective benefits.

 *“Community consultations have been limited to the pro-policy beneficiaries. There is never sufficient knowledge sharing regarding environmental issues in these communities, and when such information is volunteered by the decision makers, it is often, scanty or devoid of critical details. The hoodwinked community that is consulted, do not have the moral authority to question and demand for better environmental justice strategies and policies, especially where money has exchanged hands.” states Annet Lekuru*


Other respondents also shared a concern about the ability of the impacted communities to effectively and meaningfully participate in the decision-making and planning processes on decisions that have an impact on their environment. Hussein Kato Muyinda notes:

 *“The communities don’t have an opportunity to participate in the processes because they don’t have the skills and capacity to understand and interpret the technicalities involved especially with the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) processes and the gap between law on paper and in practice.”*

Susan Juliet Agwang noted,

 *“the limited understanding of the rights of the affected communities leaves them vulnerable to unfair decisions. Lack of trust between the leaders and the affected communities makes it even worse. The few instances where public participation is seen is during community engagements, most times organised by the local leadership, like the LC 1. However, even in these, participation is limited.”*

Further supporting this observation, human rights lawyer Kiiza Eron notes that the impacted communities are often hoodwinked to believe that they have been consulted. He observes,


 *“they (impacted communities) are rarely involved and mostly bypassed or ignored. Semblance of involvement is merely tokenism to tick boxes. The East African Crude Oil Pipeline project (EACOP), Bugoma deforestation are good examples of pretending to involve affected communities without effectively doing so.”*

A representative of the donor community states that in some cases, when it comes to expropriation (forceful acquisition of land), communities are involved in meetings etc, they are partly even


provided with legal aid. however, they do not always have access to the “right” information, leading to situations whereby they “voluntarily” sign off their land or think that evaluations of the government valuer are binding and cannot be appealed.

### **2.3.3 The institutional mechanisms needed for meaningful involvement in the planning process are absent**


The respondents further raised concerns about the spaces where key decisions are made and the lack of necessary institutional mechanisms to facilitate participation. Rebecca Karagwa argued that most of the key decisions are not made in close consultation with the impacted communities.

 *“Most conservations on environmental justice happen at high level platforms in rich and developed countries where the most affected don’t have access to. In our countries, for example Uganda, the dialogues also take place in fancy hotel rooms and most times attract elites who have only studied about the concepts but have hardly witnessed real life experiences.”*

Chris Nkwatsibwe from the Uganda National NGO Forum observed that the concerns raised by Karagwa above are partly because of the absence of institutional mechanisms.


 *“There are no institutional mechanisms put in place by the state to involve the affected communities and or vulnerable communities in the decision-making processes. The available mechanisms are patronized and are often controlled by the powerful economic and political elite.”*

Limited participation is also reported in cases of relocation of families from disaster prone areas. Kirya Mukalere Paul noted:

 *“What we are accustomed to are sudden evictions from land including in the areas prone to natural disasters like floods, landslides and mud slides. A replica of this is being witnessed in Mbale district in July to August 2022 with about 23 already confirmed dead from the floods. Instead of an institutionalized humanitarian response, the State is hell bent on giving the affected families 5 million Uganda shillings per family to leave the affected areas without application of a Human Rights Based Approach. These are areas where these people have been almost all their entire generations. How prepared are they to move on or how prepared are they for the suggested relocation drive by the State both physically and mentally?”*

### **2.3.4. Other factors impacting the level and quality of participation**

The respondents were invited to share perceptions on why they think duty bearers and multinational businesses are not adequately involving the impacted communities in the decision-making and planning processes so that there is community ownership for sustainable and peaceful extraction of the benefits of environmental resources. In response, Robert R. Kirenga, the Executive Director of the NCHRDU observed:

 *“Participation improves and increases transparency, however, due to corruption and abuse of office by state actors, it is in their interest that impacted communities are often not brought on board in the processes.”*

Aliganyira Moses Sabiiti based in the Albertine region argued that there is limited consultation because the duty bearers and multinationals believe that they know what is best for the impacted communities. He notes, “the assumption is that, it’s those at the top who know what those at the bottom want, take an example of the government projects and government programs, the monitors

or beneficiaries are informed at the later stage.”

Peter Ogik, a longstanding advocate for the rights of persons living with Albinism in Uganda states,

*“We need a very inclusive society which allows everyone to fully participate in decisions that affect the environment particularly because persons with albinism are affected sharply by climate change.” Concerns of some communities being neglected due to homophobia were also raised. Human rights lawyer Douglas Mawadri noted, “communities (sexual minorities and other key populations) are not given adequate opportunities due to homophobia, and perceptions of what they might bring to the table as pertains environment protection. The passion to defend environment rights is inborn in every human being whether they are minorities or not.”*

Denis Odwar working with the National Union of Disabled Persons of Uganda (NUDIPU) reinforces the need for inclusion of marginalised groups especially persons with disabilities(PWDs) in some of these processes;

*“Citizens especially PWDs involvement in environmental planning is minimal and in most cases, those in authority are the ones who make decisions presumably on their behalf and in some cases also abuse the environment”*

In terms of the way forward, John Robert Turyakira, the Deputy Executive Director of Environmental Shield notes,

*“planning of the project involves conducting feasibility studies, boundary opening, conducting Environmental & Social Impact Assessments (ESIA). This is where the impacted communities should fully participate to ascertain land ownership issues and environmental issues that are ecological based.”*





One of the respondents working with one of the environment rights organisations that was suspended with 53<sup>13</sup> others by Uganda's NGO bureau states that;

*"There is limited community participation in nature conservation processes. Moreover, often times, when communities are involved in nature conservation processes, the organisers of these processes are looking to legitimise their projects, and not to ensure meaningful and effective community participation in environmental conservation"*

#### **2.4. Patterns of challenges faced by environmental human rights defenders**

Respondents reported either facing challenges or knowledge of a colleague or community that have suffered challenges in their quest to stand up for environmental justice in their communities.

The most common challenges noted from the study include intimidation tactics and smear campaigns. These attacks thrive on lack or limited understanding of environmental issues and interests, defamation and character assassination, being branded political opposition or imperialist agents, blackmail, state-sponsored harassment and intimidation, judicial harassment in arbitrary arrests and malicious prosecutions on trumped up charges, detention with trials, poor response from duty bearers such as the District Environment Officers and National Environment Management Authority officials, surveillance and physical attacks.

In a related incident in March, 2022 Uganda's Attorney General, Kiryowa Kiwanuka while appearing before Parliament's Human Rights Committee to respond to a number of allegations of torture, forced disappearances and violent arrest of Ugandans by security forces warned NGOs against dictating to Government the rules and guidelines NGOs should operate within, saying those who don't want can go and operate in other nations if they don't want to abide by laws in Uganda.



*"It is Uganda you can't tell us that what is happening in Uganda should happen elsewhere, why don't you go and operate there? Since you are NGOs, you can leave Uganda and go operate there if you think the laws in Uganda aren't favourable to your activities but we must be mindful that not all these NGOs are friendly, some of them are doing things that aren't friendly to the country and we can't sit and say because you are NGO, you are untouchable, that can't happen."*

he stated<sup>14</sup>.

A respondent that preferred anonymity cited the suspension of their organisation which remains suspended to date<sup>15</sup> by Uganda's NGO Bureau under unclear circumstances. This in itself presents a cross cutting challenge by many respondents on the vulnerability of NGOs to state crackdown either due to non compliance to laws especially at grassroots level. Notably as Uganda's Oil sector continues to emerge so has NGOs on the ground that are often critical of government's omissions and failure to include communities in consultative processes on environmental rights related concerns. Government has tended to impose various legal impediments and administrative burdens that make it much more difficult for NGOs to operate and these restrictions include; Difficult or delayed registration process for NGOs; impossible requirements for obtaining official registration; tax audits requiring a temporary shutdown of the NGO until the procedure's conclusion. In some cases, respondents' cited imposition of fines that were difficult to pay as a tactic to silence them by Uganda's NGO bureau especially grassroots NGOs.

The respondents further reported incidents of extrajudicial killings, sexual molestation and gender-based abuse suffered by women human rights defenders in the communities, online bullying and harassment, obstruction of access to impacted communities, obstruction of access to information regarding agreements and contracts on oil and extractives, exclusion from spaces due to sexual orientation and gender identity, and reprisal attacks from powerful multinationals and

environmental rights violators who exploit the environment for financial gain at the expense of the larger vulnerable impacted communities.

Concerns about protection and rapid response mechanisms for environmental defenders who are at risk were also raised. The respondents noted that the available mechanisms are insufficient and are failing to timely and comprehensively respond to environmental defenders who are most-at-risk. The respondents working with NGOs also reported fears of having their NGO permits suspended or revoked for advocacy work on environmental justice issues. They noted that most organisations are facing significant funding challenges, especially after the indefinite suspension of the Democratic Governance Facility (DGF)<sup>16</sup>.

At an individual level, a number of respondents noted that they are challenged by burn out and fatigue due to sustained advocacy work on environmental justice issues, trauma and depression resulting from frustrations with the state's of breach of rule of law standards; language barriers, and lack of sufficient knowledge and information about the law and human rights standards on environmental justice issues.





## 2.5. Perceptions on responses of protection mechanisms

The environmental human rights defenders, in particular those who are most-at-risk, depend on timely and effective protection mechanisms to enable them to continue their work despite the risks that are inherent in their work.

Generally, there are two types of protection mechanisms: state protection mechanisms and non-state protection mechanisms. State mechanisms include the police and other law enforcement agencies, courts of law, the Uganda Human Rights Commission (UHRC), the Equal Opportunities Commission (EOC) and other relevant state agencies that have the mandate under the law to ensure environmental defenders carry out their work freely. Non-state protection mechanisms include civil society organisations that provide legal, medical and psychological support, religious and cultural institutions that can speak out for the protection of defenders, international and united nations agencies, diplomatic agencies and some private business corporations that stand up for human rights.

During this study, the respondents were asked to share their perceptions on whether environmental defenders have access to sufficient protection mechanisms to support them when facing the challenges listed above. Analysis of the data collected suggests that HRDs have limited understanding of the available protection mechanisms and a majority of the respondents feel that the known protections are not sufficient due to significant gaps in state protection mechanisms, slow response time, and a failure to uphold the rule of law in favour of the well-connected perpetrators and abusers who are left to enjoy impunity for the violations.

A small percentage of respondents felt that environment defenders do have access to adequate protection. For example, in an interview with a staff of a multinational company in Uganda in the oil and extractives sector who preferred

anonymity, the following was noted:



*"For this assessment, I will speak in relation to TotalEnergies EP Uganda (TEPU). First and foremost a new department that is the NGO coordination and Human Rights department was established in July 2021 to address human rights concerns and to establish a closer relationship with NGOs through sharing information. Furthermore, TotalEnergies EP Uganda respects the rights to freedom of expression and access to information and does not tolerate any threats, intimidation, harassment, or violence against those who peacefully and lawfully promote Human Rights in relation to our activities. TotalEnergies seeks to promote dialogue and exchanges with Human Rights Defenders and where appropriate, as recommended by UNGPs, seeks to exert leverage to influence others. For example, where we have been alerted of arrests, TotalEnergies EP Uganda has taken immediate steps to obtain information. Where appropriate, the relevant officials have been contacted. In each case TEPU insists on the need to respect the human rights of the persons concerned. See a published response<sup>17</sup> to the UN Special Rapporteur on arrest of HRDs in Uganda."*

On state protection mechanisms, human rights lawyer Andrew Karamagi notes that the law is often disregarded to the detriment of environmental defenders. He notes,



*"laws (like the Constitution and statutory legislation like the Environmental Act) and institutions (like the National Environment Management Authority, the Environmental Police, and the line Ministry of Lands, Water and the Environment) do exist in fact, but the protection they offer to Environmental Human Rights Defenders (EHRDs) are often disregarded, or violated outright. The powers that are involved in environmental destructions here are well connected to the State and they equally run the State, in fact,*

 *they are the State itself. They determine the economic, political, and social plays in this area. They conscript the top security echelon of this Country."*

William Leslie Amanzuru, the Founding Director of Friends of Zoka in Adjumani district noted,

 *"I have very regrettable experience with State Actors, they most times play double standards and often work for those that massively abuse our environment in terms of illegal logging, illegal timber, and commercial charcoal trade."*


Angwech Pamela expressed similar concerns as far state mechanisms are concerned. She observed,

“

“there is less protections for environmental human rights defenders especially those at grassroots. We for example are working with 35 Land Based Defenders in Acholi sub-region with well-established database including in Apaa and within refugee host communities - however when it comes to referral pathways for state actors to protect the defenders, the challenge is that the hunter will be hunted! The defenders are in most cases dealing with perpetrators of the business. That's a big risk where you feel you are collaborating with authorities for your protection but finds yourself "inside the net"”

”

Gaps in the state protection mechanisms were also flagged during the study. John Robert Turyakira observed,

 *"the Constitution of The Republic of Uganda under Article 38 provides for civic space however the lack of a Human Rights Defender protection law is a big challenge. Also lack of a Legal Aid Law renders environmental human rights defenders who can't afford legal fees vulnerable. Absence of an Environmental Court leaves the available court divisions grappling with environmental cases due to case backlogs. State institutions like Police and Resident District Commissioners seem to be unfamiliar with the work of HRDs".*



On the non-state protection mechanisms, the respondents described the status of currently available protection services. Robert R Kirenga, the Executive Director of the NCHRDU noted that,

*“there are quite some protection mechanisms in place to protect environmental defenders ranging from medical, legal, temporary and psychological support however they are not that holistic and diverse to cater for their needs.”*

On her part, Angwech Pamela noted,

*“referral and protection grants (for non-state mechanisms) are managed at national levels by bigger coalitions; therefore, grassroots defenders lack direct resources and spend more time in case validations and processes for redress. We need a booster accessible fund to address mechanism for human rights defenders in the region working within risky protection concerns such as environmental and natural resource rights advocacy. Otherwise, there more risk and less protection considering that these are lucrative business ventures and perpetrators sometimes are those in uniform (state security operatives / officials).”*

## 2.6. What environmental defenders are doing to advance environmental justice

Despite the challenges presented above, environmental defenders in Uganda are engaged in a number of important and innovative initiatives with the core objective of advancing environmental justice in their communities.

In the interview with a staff of one of the multinational corporations working in the oil and petroleum sector, the staff member observed that, “we have developed and implement a set of management plans and procedures which are critically followed by the company and its contractors in management of waste, dust,



waste water, noise and vibrations, spillage et cetera. This includes continuous engagement with the communities to understand their fears and craft a lasting solution.”

Robert R. Kirenga of the NCHRDU noted that they are

*“amplifying the voices of environmental human rights defenders and their work including providing emergency protection support to them when under threat or attack.”*

Human rights lawyer Andrew Karamagi recounted to us how he is taking action to prioritise the environment and voices of the impacted communities in the country. He is developing global strategy papers and curriculum on topics like agroecology, climate justice and climate resilient/sustainable agriculture. He involves duty bearers in planning processes to ensure that they own and support civil society interventions when it gets to implementation phase.

William Leslie Amanzuru of Friends of Zoka noted that they are engaged in community dialogues with key stakeholders like the army, police, National Forestry Authority (NFA), Uganda Wildlife Authority (UWA), Judiciary, Director of Public Prosecutions (DPP), religious, and cultural leaders. They are also producing radio talk shows and radio spot messages to build civic competency and understanding of the local


community and the local leadership, supporting community and school debates, and dramas that are intended to encourage free speech space and build the art of public speaking aimed at instilling a sense of deep thinking and analysis in the community, pursuing media led investigations, and building synergies with like mind NGOs and personalities to create more cohesion in addressing environmental challenges.

Victor Ochen of AYINET noted that they are

 *“currently embarking on a human rights-based approach to environment with focus on livelihood.”*

Angwech Pamela of GWED-G recounted how they are engaged in advocacy work as well as the capacity building of Land Based Defenders on risk management and protecting environment, documentation, monitoring and evaluations of human rights violations and referral of cases for redress. [Medical, Legal and Psycho-social].

Tabitha Netuwa of Defend Defenders noted that

 *they continue to provide support to human rights defenders at risk, provide capacity enhancement in security management and provide defenders with platforms to speak about the issues affecting them.*

Brendah Akankunda of SEATINI Uganda noted that


 *they are investing in information generation through research activities on environmental justice issues, engaging in policy engagements and capacity building, and undertaking public interest litigation on behalf of the affected or impacted communities so as to access remedies for the human and environmental violations.*

Albert Taremwa of LOSCO noted that

 *they are engaged in advocacy activities to advance environmental justice in Kigezi sub-region.*

They are also engaged in radio talk shows and community dialogues on environmental justice and also undertakes tree planting campaigns in communities of Kyanamira sub-county in Kabale district.


Job Kijja, the Founding Director of Innovations for Democratic Engagement and Action (IDEA) Uganda noted that,

 *“at a broader level, I and my organization are involved in efforts to broadly increase space for civil society, and democratic expression, which naturally compliments environmental justice efforts.”*

Philip Eric Bakalikwira, the Team Leader of the Real Ecosystems Solutions (RESO) noted that his organisation is engaged in


 *“continued advocacy about environmental rights and the key benefits of protecting ecosystems and ecosystems services through media and public meetings and engagement with local governments to upscale the conversation as well as influencing them to integrate environmental issues in their plans and budgets.”*

The Environmental Shield is also engaged in a number of initiatives. Robert Turyakira noted that they are engaged in

 *“environmental litigation in public interest under Article 50 of the Constitution, for example the Bugoma Forest case both in the High Court of Uganda and East African Court of Justice (EACJ). Also due to the information gap, we have done access to environmental information litigation as per Article 41 of the Constitution to demand for Environmental audits. We also do strategic advocacy and activism through collaborations with like-minded organisations into coalitions and climate networks to build a critical force. We also do Environmental research and Environmental policy analysis and*



*disseminate information to carry out Awareness. We are also connecting Biodiversity and pollution issues for example (plastic pollution) to the extent of the need for Wildlife Conservation especially at the grassroots and local community. Recently we are also forming a nexus between environmental issues with food security therefore encouraging climate smart agriculture."*

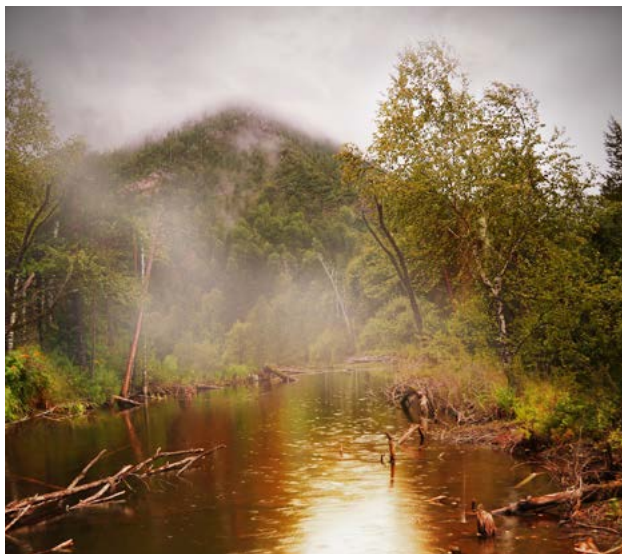
 Brian Chanwat, the Founding Director Strategic Response International noted that they

 *"continue to support strategic pro bono legal advisory and representation to those that approach us."*

A respondent that preferred anonymity but working with the Uganda Human Rights Commission stated that presently the UHRC is monitoring business enterprises to ensure compliance with human rights standards such as business involved in the oil sector in the Albertine region simultaneously with continuous sensitization of the general public.

### 3. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### 3.1. Conclusion




The purpose of this study was to investigate the state of environmental justice in Uganda at a time in our history in which the effects of environmental degradation and the resulting climate change have life threatening consequences. These consequences are disproportionately borne by certain communities that have little say in the decisions that impact their livelihoods and lives. Environmental justice is still a relatively new concept in Uganda, but the study findings aim to evenly spread the negative environmental repercussions and ensure that impacted communities are consulted and involved in the decision-making processes about environmental issues.

While many human rights defenders are engaging in a number of activities to defend the environment and seek remedies and justice where violations are reported, the initiatives are not clearly structured to holistically contribute to environmental justice in Uganda. This is evident in the responses we received on the current interventions organisations were currently involved in towards ensuring Environmental Justice. Specifically for example on the issue of protection support, one respondent indicated the disconnect between the national level protection support vis vis the sub-national level protection mechanisms.

The study findings further indicate that the two critical elements of environmental justice – that is the right for impacted communities to be represented and the right to participate in the decision-making and planning processes – are observed to a low extent.

In terms of representation, the findings presented a picture of Uganda in which elected leaders are not adequately representing the needs and opinion of their communities, there are insufficient opportunities for public consultation through community meetings or other mechanisms, and civil society organizations are being impeded in their effort to represent impacted communities.

Charles Batte, a youth leader stated that;

 *I work with small holder farmers in various districts and with grassroots communities, I am now aware that the Climate change Act 2021<sup>18</sup> was enacted into law, however at no point was I aware of a workshop in the districts where I work when smallholder farmers were engaged on this. Even I was not aware of the processes undertaken to pass this law. I lead a youth NGO whose work is principally focused on climate change, I could be easily reached much better than the farmers but I was not. That is a story that many other youth in this space could relate with."*

In terms of meaningful participation, the respondents provided evidence suggesting that impacted communities are purposefully excluded from the decision-making process; the impacted communities lack an understanding of their rights or do not have sufficient knowledge of the technicalities involved in the issue to engage in the process; and institutional mechanisms needed to facilitate involvement are absent. The climate of human rights violations, abuses and other challenges faced by human rights defenders further impede the ability of impacted communities to meaningfully engage in the decision-making and planning processes on environmental issues.

Nicholas Muhereza, an oil and gas legal practitioner however states that while the question of participation is vital the need to protect the environment needs to be balanced with the need to alleviate our people from energy Poverty or access to cheaper and renewable sources of energy especially in Urban centres and Africa at large. And this leaves many unanswered questions on the many barriers and commitment to ensure environmental justice is prioritized before profit or other financial gains.

Ronald Nampura a lawyer and youth leader states that Environmental Human rights defenders are not sufficiently protected, the Legal regime is insufficient and I think it's the very reason for the proposed enactment of the Human rights defenders protection bill 2020<sup>19</sup>. He continues to state





that municipal laws in Uganda do not recognize who a human rights defender is something that has occasioned violations from state agents like arbitrary arrests. The bill seeks to recognise, promote and enhance the protection of the work and activities of human rights defenders

These barriers must be overcome before environmental justice in Uganda will be more effective.

### 3.2. Recommendations

Based on the information gathered during this study, I have formulated the following recommendations to improve the state of environmental justice in Uganda.

a) Listen to the environmental actors and create an enabling environment for environmental defenders and their NGOs to do their work without intimidation, harassment or fear of reprisal attacks.

b) Translate the laws, policies and issues of environmental justice to the local languages across all sub-regions to promote awareness and informed engagement.

c) Take action to end regulatory capture to ensure that the state regulators such as NEMA are able to carry out their work as dictated by the obtaining laws and policies.

d) The Parliament of Uganda should promote progressive and inclusive public policy legislation through sufficient and inclusive public hearings and meaningful considerations of the opinions received from the public, in particular the impacted communities.

e) Empower the existing state regulators working on environmental issues through increase in recourse allocations and political support for them to do their work independently as required by the law.

f) Increase funding for environmental NGOs, in particular the groups working at district and sub-regional level to ensure impact with the communities.

g) Build the capacity of environmental defenders in human rights monitoring, documentation and reporting; physical and digital security; and fundraising.

h) Review non-state protection mechanisms available today to improve their ability to timely respond to the needs of environmental defenders from district and sub-regional levels.

- i) State agencies should incorporate principles of climate justice within the legislation, policies, plans and other actions.
- j) The Parliament of Uganda should review all laws that impact on civic space, such as the Non-Governmental Organisations Act 2016 to ensure that they are compliant with the Constitution of Uganda and seek to promote rather than impede the freedom of association and other civic space rights.
- k) Public bodies should respect the provisions of the Access to Information Act 2005 to ensure that environmental defenders and impacted communities have access to relevant information for meaningful engagement participation in the decision making and planning processes.
- l) The police and the Director of Public Prosecutions should take action to ensure that the perpetrators of violations and abuses against environmental defenders are brought to account to end the culture of impunity for the crimes.

## Endnotes

- 1 Green deal is an Environmental Human Rights Defenders organization formed to empower grassroots communities, Human Rights Defenders with tools to advocate for strategic climate action and challenge actions of corporations and governments. For more details [www.greendealuganda.org](http://www.greendealuganda.org)
- 2 The term climate change is used to describe shifts in the average conditions – temperature and weather patterns – over a long period of time.
- 3 Uganda’s Perennial Floods Cast the Spotlight on the Region’s Climate Change-Related Disasters <https://reliefweb.int/report/uganda/ugandas-perennial-floods-cast-spotlight-regions-climate-change-related-disasters>
- 4 Uganda Multi-Hazard Infographic - Response/DRR Platform <https://reliefweb.int/report/uganda/uganda-multi-hazard-infographic-responsedrr-platform-published-8-september-2022>
- 5 Data Source: Tree cover loss: Hansen/UMD/Google/USGS/NASA via Global Forest Watch. Administrative boundaries: Global Administrative Areas database (GADM), version 3.6. [www.globalforestwatch.org](http://www.globalforestwatch.org)
- 6 Encroachment, logging threaten Adjumani’s Zoka forest reserve <https://www.independent.co.ug/encroachment-logging-threaten-adjumanis-zoka-forest-reserve/>
- 7 The Bugoma Central Forest Reserve is a protected tropical rainforest that is home to 34 species of mammals, including 4 globally threatened species and 9 that are listed in the International Union for Conservation of Nature’s red list. Approximately 600 chimpanzees, live in this stretch of tropical rainforest. ([www.ugandaparks.com](http://www.ugandaparks.com))
- 8 The UN defines environmental human rights defenders as “individuals and groups who, in their personal or professional capacity and in a peaceful manner, strive to protect and promote human rights relating to the environment, including water, air, land, flora and fauna”. [www.unep.org](http://www.unep.org)
- 9 Ben Crump: Trial lawyer for Justice, *Environmental Justice Lawyer*, <https://bencrump.com/environmental-justice-lawyer/>
- 10 1995 Constitution of the Republic of Uganda (as amended), <https://ulii.org/akn/ug/act/statute/1995/constitution/eng%402018-01-05>
- 11 Interview with Andrew Karamagi. Further reference [https://www.rtachsn.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/RTAC-Zimbabwe\\_Market-Study\\_Matabeleland-North-Province-1.pdf](https://www.rtachsn.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/RTAC-Zimbabwe_Market-Study_Matabeleland-North-Province-1.pdf)
- 12 [www.eacop.com](http://www.eacop.com)
- 13 Uganda: Uganda’s NGO Bureau suspends the activities of 54 NGOs in the country <https://www.fidh.org/en/issues/human-rights-defenders/uganda-uganda-s-ngo-bureau-suspends-the-activities-of-54-ngos-in-the>
- 14 Attorney General Says Some NGOs Are ‘Enemies of Uganda’ <https://businessfocus.co.ug/attorney-general-says-some-ngos-are-enemies-of-uganda/>
- 15 Ibid
- 16 Museveni gives DGF five months <https://www.independent.co.ug/museveni-gives-dgf-five-months/>
- 17 Link: <https://spcommreports.ohchr.org/TMResultsBase/DownloadFile?gId=36513>
- 18 Uganda assents to its climate change Act <https://access-coalition.org/uganda-assents-to-its-climate-change-act/>
- 19 Human Rights Defenders protection bill 2020 <https://parliamentwatch.ug/bills/human-rights-defenders-protection-bill-2020/>







