



## CENTRE FOR ENVIRONMENTAL RESEARCH AND AGRICULTURE INNOVATIONS

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### A PROCEEDINGS REPORT FOR A RADIO TALKSHOW ON BUGOMA FOREST ISSUES BY CERAI AND BUGOMA FOREST HOST COMMUNITIES.



**April 14, 2023**

**UBC RADIO EMPIKA HOONA**

**9:30PM – 10:30PM**

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### 1.0 INTRODUCTION

Bugoma forest is located in Kikuube district and is being subjected to massive destruction by different parties including land grabbers and Hoima sugar limited. Since the destruction different concerned parties starting from local leaders, sub county leaders, district leaders, cultural leaders and National leaders among others have been engaged by the task force of save Bugoma forest campaign under several occasions to stop the destruction of the forest but in vain. Since the destruction several problems have emerged like murder, theft divorces among others all caused by increased population among others.

On February 10,2023 Bugoma host communities had a meeting with minister of lands requesting for help by opening up the boundaries of the forest so as to stop the conflicts arising by Hoima sugar ltd, the community and the forest itself due to failure to understand where each of them passes. They were promised to have the process started but waited in vain.

Therefore, on March 9, 2023 Bugoma forest host communities with the support from CERAI wrote a petition to the speaker of parliament seeking him with the entire cabinet to stop the destruction of the forest. The motion was put on order paper on 28 Sept but to dismay by the next session it disappeared. Therefore, failure to table the motion caused worries among the task force of save Bugoma forest campaign, which resulted to a peaceful demonstration that was organized but also did not help as the destruction continued and just intimidations increased.

Given such situation, CERAI and its partners saw it not worthy so took some steps like issuing a press statement, having engagement meetings with different concerned parties and given no action and continued destruction of forest and peoples' crops led to organization of a radio talk show on April 14, 2023 at UBC radio so as to broad cast the message to a wide coverage.

### 2.0 PARTICIPANTS

UBC radio's presenter Mr Mugabi Robert moderated the radio talk show and the guests were,

1. Mr. Gerald Barekye CERAI
2. Lydia Byogero Hoima
3. Mwaka Geraldine Hoima
4. Edgar Budrahika CERAI

### 3.0 KEY ISSUES DISCUSSED

The moderator allowed all the participants have a brief introduction and asked different questions to the radio talk show guests including the following:

**Moderator: *Requested Mr. Gerald Barekye to briefly talk about CERAI and the reason for coming?***

Mr. Barekye began by informing the listeners about what CERAI does in that it fights for the environment conservation, human rights, deals in energy that is how it's generated and supplied, deals in oil concerns projects that is the pipeline and also sensitizes communities on their rights and power to fairness among others.

He went ahead to explain the reason for coming as is to talk about Bugoma forest central reserve; since 2016 up to date, the forest boundaries have not been opened. Different offices including the Ministry of lands, housing and urban development, Bunyoro kitara kingdom, local government have been contacted but in vain. This so happened when Hoima sugar limited was leased land by Bunyoro kitara kingdom in 2016 of which is within the forest area of 41000hactares, so need to have the hectares determined first.

**Moderator: *ministry of lands came and took some steps to have the forest boundaries opened, what is the gap?***

Mr. Barekye informed the moderator and the listeners that it's not the first time when such steps were being taken. The government cabinet instructed the ministry of lands to have the forest boundaries opened but the challenge is why not open the boundaries and the only way to protect the forest is having the boundaries opened first.

**Moderator: *inquired to know where is the problem?***

Mr. Barekye pointed out the issue of corruption by the concerned parties and implementing bodies/people like the fiscal planning committee which is in charge of drafting a plan which shows where forests, rivers, towns are/pass. Therefore, he added that without following the plan nothing progressive can be achieved.

**Moderator: *have the neighbours played part in blocking the process?***

Mr. Edgar pointed out that local communities being the original keepers of the forest, considering them before any activity is taken is key and based on the different engagement with ministry of lands, district local government, Bunyoro kitara kingdom among others, it was agreed that the communities have to be engaged first in terms of sensitizations.

Considering the need to first cross examine the validity of the land titles owned by some community members is not necessary as the land titles were given before boundary opening so he

suggested that there is need for the boundary opening exercise to be conducted then the government sorts its self with land title owners in case of their land is found within the forest reserve.

Mr. Barekye then concluded by pointing out that laws have been neglected and there is need for community empowerment so as to ensure peaceful exercise.

***Moderator: how far have you reached with the issues of Bugoma forest boundary opening/update?***

MS. Lydia explained how the situation is terrible at a moment given the fact that nothing has put into consideration depending on the agreement from the different engagements with different officials including officials from ministry of lands like having community sensitization meetings, lc1 chairperson involvement among others.

She added that it is to dismay that people have been evicted from their land even before the forest boundaries have been opened like the Tripona and Nyabongo in Kyagwali. Surprisingly the eviction was done forcefully with armed forces and even without any formal notification, peoples' property and crops (like bananas, coffee, and cocoa among others) were destroyed with tractors.

She added that there was call for property evidence validation from the community members, which were presented, but after validation, no information was given back to the members but just produced a report for their own interest. "The situation is not good and alarming", he ended.

***Moderator: aren't the people within the forest?***

Mr. Edgar cited that people knows where they pass. But added that Hoima sugar limited is destroying peoples' property and there is no way people can fight with armed forces so requests that forest boundaries are being opened.

***Moderator: what are you doing as chairperson focal person or what are you asking for?***

Mr. Edgar pointed out that there is need to plant trees within homes so he called for cooperation to conserve nature by the people.

Given the fact that the green zone has been found out to have been almost destroyed up to the cultural sites (this is when Edgar moved with the prime minister and chief priest Bunyoro kitara kingdom in the forest), so he requested Bunyoro kitara kingdom to sensitize the community on the importance of the cultural sites and why they need to be conserved.

He also pointed out that there is need for the leaders to come up and have the forest conserved.

He finally requested for the unsolved cases to be resolved by court.

***Moderator: what solutions do you give as an organization towards harassments and unfavourable conditions happening?***

Mr. Barekye of CERAI cited out some solutions as

- Community members need to engage the government officials like MPs, NFA, NEMA so as to create confidence and have the forest conserved.

- MPs need to ensure that the motion is tabled before parliament and ensure forest boundaries opened as they have the capacity.
- Sensitization of the community by different stake holders like the government, organizations and investors among others so as to ensure transparency and peace
- Need by court to have all the cases filled over Bugoma forest judged. There cases over Bugoma forest in court which haven't been judged, hence "justice delayed is justice denied" he added.
- All in all is to have the forest boundaries opened, this is hoped to solve all the issues.

#### 4.0 FEEDBACK FROM CALL- IN LISTENERS.

Mr. Emma pointed his concern to the MPs as they are expected to respond to the situation so he requested them to come up and help the people.

Mr. Gilbert requested all players to use the truth, and no need to use ignorance and cause more trouble

He also added that Bunyoro kingdom has the greatest power so requested them to come up and help the situation.

Mr. Francis, neighbor of the forest began by appreciation CERAI and went ahead to say that his crops like banana, coffee and cocoa were destroyed and he used to get fees for his kids.

Mr. Benoni commented that he is in the pain that the forest is being destroyed.

One of the listeners cited that the situation is not good at all, peoples' crops are destroyed but surprisingly the leaders of Kikkube did not react to the situation. So he requested the government of Uganda to help the community.

One of the listeners was concerned with the charcoal burnt in that where do the taxes from that charcoal go?

#### 5.0 RESPONSE TOWARDS LISTENERS' FEEDBACK.

Mr. Edgar began by appreciating the callers and agreed with them. He added that the issues of wild animals attack need to be looked through by concerned parties so as to stop wild animals to human conflicts.

He also appreciated the efforts put by the deputy Prime Minister Bunyoro kitara kingdom and chief priest so he requested them to continue with the spirit of fighting so as to have farmers harvest their crops.

Mr. Barekye of CERAI began by appreciating the callers and listeners and agreed to their concerns. He added the government need to come up and help the people and have the forest conserved as most are crying for their help and have trust in them.

He also added that there is no need to have the wild animals relocated as different animals need different weather so there is just need to have the forest conserved. He also gave an example of forest elephants which were confirmed by NFA to only found in Bugoma forest so change of environment may not help or even lead to extinction.

Furthermore, he called upon government to ensure biodiversity is safe, communities are protected and safe.

Additionally, Bunyoro kitara kingdom being the strongest in terms of having the forest conserved, he requested the kingdom to ensure the forest if conserved and the people are not harassed.

Finally he requested the government to ensure peoples' destroyed crops and properties are being compensated.

## 6.0 CONCLUSIONS

Mr. Edgar concluded by thanking everyone for the reactions and requested the concerned parties to listen to both sides that is Hoima sugar and community members. There is need to have the forest conserved he ended.

Mr. Barekye also began by thanking listeners and the callers and went ahead to request all the people to come up and join in the struggle so as to have the forest conserved and peoples' lands also conserved.

**END**