THE TERRA WATCH

STREC Quarterly Newsletter

Issue 03 (July–September 2025)

Theme:

From Local Struggles to the Global Stage: Amplifying Community Voices Against Fossil Fuels and Building Collective Action for Climate Justice

Participants attending the 47th Session of the World Heritage Committee at UNESCO Headquarters in Paris, France

Dear Reader,

We are delighted to share with you the third issue of our 2025 quarterly newsletter, The Terre Watch. This edition highlights key moments, achievements, and struggles that shaped our work in the past quarter.

A major highlight was the exchange learning visit organized by STREC between communities affected by the Kingfisher oil project in Buhuuka, Kikuube District, and oil refinery–affected families in Kyakaboga Village, Hoima District. The visit provided a platform for mutual learning, solidarity, and empowerment. Both communities, who share experiences of displacement, disrupted livelihoods, and environmental harm from Uganda's oil developments, exchanged lessons that can guide others facing similar challenges.

Internationally, STREC's voice was heard during the 47th session of the World Heritage Committee at UNESCO Headquarters in Paris, where our CEO delivered a statement on behalf of Africa's civil society organizations regarding World Heritage sites threatened by fossil fuel projects.

We also participated in the OilWatch Africa conference in Kampala, held under the theme "From Exploitation to Restoration." The dialogue addressed climate justice, debt cancellation, and reparations for Africa, amplifying calls for a just energy transition.

At the grassroots level, STREC supported youth-led actions during the Kick Total Out of Africa campaign. Together with the StopEACOP Coalition, we marked the Africa Week of Action by demanding the release of peaceful climate defenders, exposing the criminalization of environmental activism, and mobilizing global solidarity for climate justice.

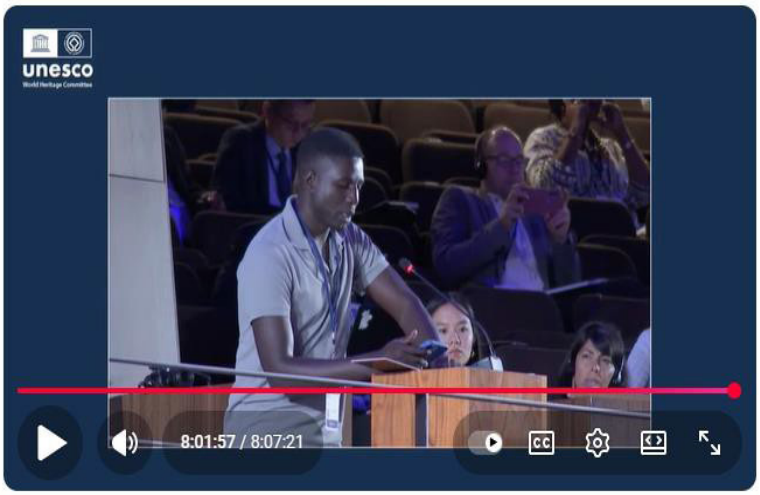
We thank you for your continued support and invite you to reflect with us on these shared struggles and victories.

Enjoy reading!

Editorial Team

Ms. Nakalyowa Winnie Ms. Suzan Namome
Mr. Dennis Kumbuga

STREC Raises Africa's Voice at UNESCO on Threats to World Heritage Sites from Oil Projects.



Mr. Cirrus Kabaale delivering a presentation at the 47th Session of the World Heritage Committee, UNESCO Headquarters, Paris, France.

Between 6 and 16 July 2025, the Strategic Response on Environmental Conservation (STREC) proudly represented African civil society organizations during the 47th Session of the World Heritage Committee at UNESCO Headquarters in Paris, France. Mr. Cirrus Kabaale delivered a statement on behalf of CSOs across Africa, raising urgent concerns about fossil fuel projects threatening some of the continent's most treasured World Heritage sites.

One of the critical cases highlighted was the Ngorongoro Conservation Area (NCA) in Tanzania, a UNESCO World Heritage site globally recognized for its unique biodiversity, rich cultural heritage, and fragile ecosystems. While the East African Crude Oil Pipeline (EACOP) does not physically cross the NCA, both the pipeline and the NCA lie within the Internal Drainage Basin (IDB), a rare closed watershed system where water does not flow to the sea.

The IDB is highly sensitive because water from rainfall, surface flow, and groundwater circulates within the basin, linking multiple ecosystems. For instance, Lake Eyasi part of the IDB is crossed by about 235 km of the pipeline, with the closest distance to the lake being roughly 100 km. Any pollution in Lake Eyasi could travel through interconnected hydrological systems, eventually impacting Ngorongoro. Studies show that most of Ngorongoro's water originates as rainfall outside the crater before traveling into the basin, reinforcing the need for watershed-scale management. This means that an oil spill or leak from EACOP could contaminate Lake Eyasi, potentially concentrating pollutants that would harm Ngorongoro's wildlife, ecosystems, and communities.

This issue is not just ecological, it is deeply social. Indigenous peoples and local communities rely on the IDB's fragile water systems for survival in an already dry and drought prone region. Disruptions caused by oil spills, accidents, or leakages could destroy water sources, livelihoods, and cultural heritage. Communities around Ngorongoro and Lake Eyasi have repeatedly expressed fears that the pipeline could undermine their way of life, leaving them more vulnerable to poverty and climate shocks.

STREC pointed out that the EACOP Environmental and Social Impact Assessment (ESIA) for Tanzania acknowledges that the pipeline crosses the IDB and will impact both surface and groundwater. However, the report falls short of analyzing the full system wide risks. Instead, it offers only generic statements about oil spills and accidents without addressing their implications on ecosystem integrity, biodiversity conservation, and water security across the basin.

In light of this, our statement delivered three critical messages to the Tanzanian government and the World Heritage Committee:

1. **Conduct a basin-wide assessment** of the pipeline's impacts on the IDB watershed, with a focus on hydrological connections, biodiversity, and human livelihoods.
2. **Strengthen accountability of EACOP developers** by requiring comprehensive spill-prevention and response mechanisms that reflect basin-wide vulnerabilities.
3. **Safeguard Ngorongoro's Outstanding Universal Value (OUV)** by prioritizing environmental and cultural protection over extractive development.

The intervention at UNESCO amplified the voices of frontline communities who depend on these ecosystems for survival.

It also reminded global leaders that protecting World Heritage sites requires looking beyond physical boundaries and adopting a holistic approach to ecosystem management.

As STREC, we remain committed to exposing the hidden threats of fossil fuel projects and to ensuring that Africa's cultural and ecological treasures are preserved for future generations.

STREC Facilitates Exchange Learning Visit Between Kingfisher Oil Project Affected People and Oil Refinery Affected Communities

Kingfisher oil project–affected community members during an exchange learning visit with refinery-affected families in Kyakaboga Village

To protect the privacy of individuals, this image has been altered

On September 26, 2025, STREC facilitated an exchange learning visit between communities affected by the Kingfisher oil project in Buhuuka Parish, Kikuube District, and refinery-affected families resettled in Kyakaboga Village, Hoima District. The visit was hosted at the Kyakaboga Community Hall.

The purpose of this exchange was to create a platform for mutual learning, solidarity, and empowerment. Both communities face displacement, disrupted livelihoods, and environmental damage as a result of Uganda's oil developments, yet each has distinct experiences that offer valuable lessons for the other.

For Kingfisher host communities, this visit provided an opportunity to hear firsthand from refinery-affected families who were displaced from Kabaale Parish to Kyakaboga. These families shared challenges related to inadequate compensation, broken promises of livelihood restoration, and ongoing struggles to access essential services. By listening to these experiences, Kingfisher-affected persons can better anticipate and prepare for the impacts they are currently facing, including threats of forced evictions, restricted fishing access, and loss of ancestral lands.

Meanwhile, refinery-affected families benefited from sharing their stories, resilience strategies, and advocacy lessons with Kingfisher communities. This peer-to-peer exchange strengthened collective voices and built solidarity among oil-affected communities across Uganda.

Ultimately, the visit aimed to foster resilience, inform advocacy strategies, and empower both communities to protect their rights, livelihoods, and environment while holding duty bearers accountable.

STREC Participated in Conference organized by Oil Watch Africa on Debt Cancellation and Climate Justice

STREC took part in a conference convened by Oilwatch Africa in Kampala

On August 25, 2025, STREC participated in a landmark conference organized by Oilwatch Africa in Kampala, Uganda, under the theme "From Exploitation to Restoration." The conference brought together climate justice advocates, environmental rights defenders, civil society leaders, and grassroots community representatives from across the continent to discuss one of Africa's most pressing challenges: the intersection of fossil fuel exploitation, debt crises, and climate injustice.

The gathering featured participants from Uganda, Democratic Republic of Congo, Mali, Togo, South Africa, Namibia, Mozambique, Chad, Tanzania, Ghana, and Nigeria countries where communities are directly

experiencing the devastating impacts of oil and gas extraction. For many, the conference provided a rare opportunity to share firsthand stories of displacement, environmental degradation, and the destruction of livelihoods caused by fossil fuel projects. These stories highlighted how Africa's resource wealth continues to enrich multinational corporations while leaving host communities in cycles of poverty and ecological harm.

Central to the discussions was the urgent call for **debt cancellation and climate reparations.** Participants emphasized that African nations are trapped in a vicious cycle: they take on unsustainable debts to finance development, yet much of this financing goes into fossil fuel projects that exacerbate climate change and displace vulnerable communities.

At the same time, African countries bear the brunt of climate impacts floods, droughts, food insecurity despite contributing the least to global emissions. Canceling illegitimate debts and securing reparations from polluting nations and corporations were identified as crucial steps toward achieving climate justice. For STREC, the conference was a valuable platform to amplify the voices of oil host communities from Uganda's Albertine region, particularly those affected by the Kingfisher, Tilenga, and East African Crude Oil Pipeline (EACOP) projects. By sharing local experiences of displacement, restricted fishing access, and environmental damage in Buhuuka and other host areas, STREC contributed to the broader continental conversation on how fossil fuel exploitation undermines both human rights and sustainable development.

The conference also fostered solidarity and collective strategy-building. Activists agreed on the need for cross-border collaboration to challenge harmful fossil fuel investments, advocate for just energy transitions, and push for accountability from both African governments and global financial institutions.

STREC's participation reaffirmed its commitment to community-centered advocacy and solidarity with African struggles against exploitation. The lessons and networks built during this gathering will strengthen ongoing campaigns in Uganda and beyond, ensuring that the fight for climate justice, debt cancellation, and sustainable livelihoods continues with renewed energy.

STREC Organises Workshop for EACOP-Affected Women and Youth in Greater Masaka

Women and youth from the Greater Masaka sub-region participate in a two-day workshop organized by STREC in Masaka town, where over 60 participants from Lwengo, Kyotera, Rakai, and Sembabule districts came together to share experiences and strategize on addressing the social, economic, and environmental challenges linked to the East African Crude Oil Pipeline (EACOP)

On September 2 and 3, 2025, STREC organized a workshop for women and youth affected by the East African Crude Oil Pipeline (EACOP) from the Greater Masaka sub-region. The event, held in Masaka town, attracted over 60 participants from Lwengo, Kyotera, Rakai, and Sembabule districts. These districts are heavily impacted by land acquisition, displacement, and the broader environmental disruptions associated with the EACOP project.

The workshop was designed as a safe space for women and youth to reflect on their lived experiences, exchange knowledge, and build collective strategies to address the multiple challenges they face due to Uganda's oil developments. It highlighted not only the economic and environmental dimensions of oil exploitation but also the gendered impacts, where women and young people often bear the greatest burden.

Participants shared testimonies of how EACOP has affected their daily lives. Women reported cases of lost land that for generations provided food, firewood, and water sources. Many families in Kyotera and Lwengo have been left without adequate compensation, forcing women to take on casual labor or travel long distances to sustain their households.

This has worsened food insecurity and placed enormous pressure on women as primary caregivers. Youth participants explained how the pipeline has limited their opportunities to engage in agriculture, which was once the backbone of their livelihoods. In Rakai, for example, displaced families noted that young people who had planned to inherit land for farming are now left landless and without prospects for the future. Several youth also reported dropping out of school after their families were displaced, as compensation money was inadequate to cover education costs.

Environmental concerns also featured strongly in the dialogue. Communities raised fears that the pipeline construction would lead to deforestation, destruction of wetlands, and contamination of water sources. In Sembabule District, participants noted how wetlands critical for farming and fishing are already under threat. For many households, these ecosystems are not only sources of food and income but also part of their cultural identity.

Despite these challenges, the workshop emphasized resilience and the importance of collective action. Participants were reminded that women and youth have historically been at the forefront of community mobilization and can play a pivotal role in resisting harmful oil projects. Through group discussions, they identified strategies such as documentation of grievances, community petitions, and peaceful demonstrations as tools to demand accountability from government and oil companies. Local examples were highlighted to inspire action. Women from Kyotera recalled how, in 2023, they marched peacefully to the district offices to protest unfair compensation, forcing local authorities to reopen investigations into their cases. Youth groups in Rakai also shared experiences of organizing football tournaments and cultural events as creative platforms to raise awareness about the dangers of EACOP. These stories served as powerful reminders of the potential for grassroots mobilization to shape the conversation around oil and gas.

By the end of the workshop, participants resolved to strengthen collaboration across districts in the Greater Masaka region. They agreed to form a women-and-youth-led task force that will coordinate efforts to monitor EACOP's impacts, document human rights abuses, and advocate for alternative, sustainable development pathways.

They also emphasized the importance of amplifying women's voices in national and international spaces and committed to engaging with the StopEACOP coalition and other networks to ensure that the concerns of rural women and youth from Greater Masaka are not ignored in broader climate justice campaigns.

For STREC, the workshop was part of its broader mission to empower grassroots communities to resist harmful fossil fuel projects and advocate for a just energy transition. By centering the voices of women and youth, STREC ensured that those most affected by the pipeline are at the heart of resistance strategies.

The event concluded with a call to solidarity: that women and youth across Uganda must stand together to challenge exploitation and to demand a future where livelihoods, dignity, and the environment are protected above profit. In the words of one participant from Sembabule:

> *"We may be women and young people, but our voices are strong. If we speak together, the government and oil companies will have to listen."*

STREC Supports Youth Campaign in the Kick Total Out of Africa Action

STREC joined the StopEACOP Coalition during the Africa Week of Action under the banner Kick Total Out of Africa, standing in solidarity with frontline communities to demand the release of peaceful climate defenders, expose the criminalization of environmental activism, and amplify global calls for climate justice and accountability from TotalEnergies

On 21st August 2025, STREC joined the Stop EACOP Coalition in marking the Africa Week of Action under the banner *of Kick Total Out of Africa*. The campaign focused on demanding the immediate release of peaceful climate defenders, exposing the growing criminalization of environmental activism, and amplifying calls to hold TotalEnergies accountable for its destructive fossil fuel projects across the continent. It also sought to mobilize global solidarity for climate justice and to shine a light on the injustices faced by communities on the frontline of oil and gas exploitation.

STREC actively contributed through multiple actions that combined grassroots mobilization with global outreach. A vibrant social media storm was launched to draw attention to the plight of communities affected by the East African Crude Oil Pipeline (EACOP) and to highlight the urgent need to stop its construction. This online campaign reached thousands of people, sparking conversations and drawing new allies into the movement. Beyond the digital space, STREC also joined youth leaders and community members to deliver a petition directly to TotalEnergies, demanding accountability and an end to the company's expansion of fossil fuel projects in Africa. The petition represented not only the voices of communities in Uganda but also a broader continental call for justice.

A peaceful climate protest further reinforced these demands. Organized in partnership with youth activists, the protest provided a platform for frontline voices to be heard. Participants carried placards, chanted slogans, and delivered messages of resistance, all while emphasizing the importance of non-violence in the struggle for climate justice. The protest drew media coverage, helping to raise awareness both locally and internationally about the risks and human rights violations linked to EACOP and similar projects.

Through these combined actions, STREC and its partners strengthened solidarity among local communities, national organizations, and international allies. The campaign demonstrated the power of collective resistance and reminded the public that the fight against harmful fossil fuel projects is not just a local struggle but part of a global demand for justice, equity, and sustainability.

For STREC, supporting the Kick Total Out of Africa action reaffirmed its commitment to empowering youth, defending community rights, and challenging the expansion of fossil fuels in Uganda and across Africa.

STREC IN THE MEDIA

LETTERS

NEW VISION, Thursday, March 5, 2020 15

LETTER OF THE DAY

Empower women to champion the use of clean renewable energy

EDITOR: Women in Uganda are excessively responsible for household duties like fetching firewood for heating, lighting and cooking. Most women, particularly those in rural areas, depend on natural resources.

However, because of climate change challenges such as drought, deforestation and unreliable rainfall, these women are unable to access natural resources. In fact most of the households still depend on kerosene as a source of lighting.

This source of energy imposes health implications, respiratory problems and contains hydrocarbons that contribute to global greenhouse gas emissions in the atmosphere hence causing global warming.

Although the energy sector has progressively improved, there is still an energy crisis. A significantly small percentage of renewable energy can be reported.

World Bank's global tracking framework report indicates that renewable energy accounted for only 18% of the global energy mix in 2015.

The World Bank further stated that 1.2 billion people globally had no access to electricity while 2.8 billion people rely on wood or other biomass for cooking and heating their homes. Fundamentally, 80% of this population is said to live in sub-Saharan Africa, which includes Uganda.

Therefore, educating these women and helping them establish solar power plants in their homes will enable uninterrupted lighting, heating and cooking. Poultry farming is a common venture among women.

It would be expanded and strengthened when there is reliable supply of power. Solar energy would enable women undertake the activity successfully because it is renewable, clean and sustainable at the same time used for lighting, cooking and heating.

And while it is clear that women can influence a drastic shift to renewable energy, it is important to consider them as equal partners in climate change decision-making processes. Information is power.

The more the women who understand the causes and effects of climate change, the higher the chances of developing mitigation and adaptation measures. In fact, women face the consequences of climate change more than men do. Lack of energy impinges women's freedom.

In order to attain this freedom, women can actively engage in advocating cleaner energy since they always want the best for their families. They will be willing to forego activities that deplete natural resources in order to preserve them for future generations because they are better in upholding sustainable resource utilisation.

Nevertheless, Government should further consider women as agents of change and also be considered to participate in all stages of strategising and executing energy development projects, especially renewable energy because without access to modern energy, women and girls spend most of their time in basic subsistence tasks that are time-consuming and physically draining.

Clean cooking solutions is the first step towards women's empowerment and reduces in-house air pollution, improves health and saves time. Solar lanterns and solar panels should be available in rural areas because people can satisfactorily watch television, listen to radios as well as charge mobile phones and torches.

Patrick Edema,
Environmental Engineer, Kampala

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The Letters Editor, P. O. Box 9815 Kampala; or email: letters@newvision.co.ug
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Do you have a burning issue?
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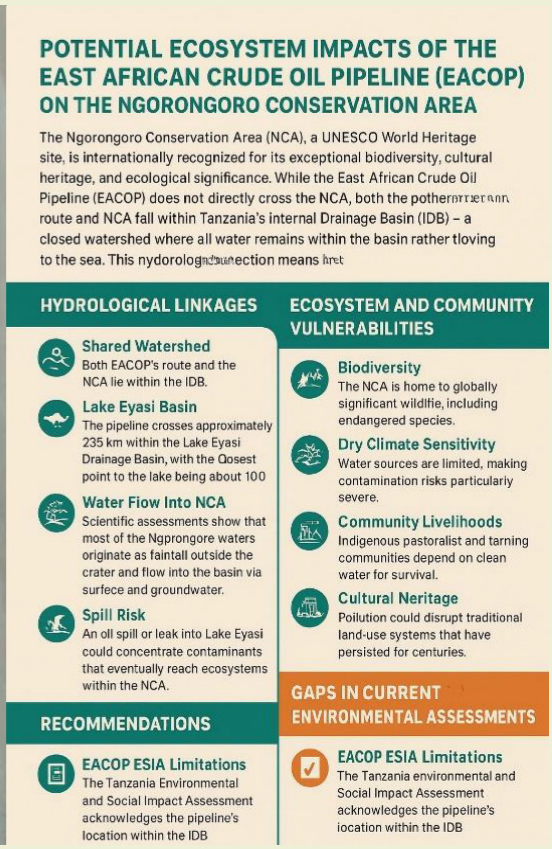
PICTURE BY HAJARAH NALWADDA

Lets celebrate our women



POTENTIAL ECOSYSTEM IMPACTS OF THE EAST AFRICAN CRUDE OIL PIPELINE (EACOP) ON THE NGORONGORO CONSERVATION AREA

The Ngorongoro Conservation Area (NCA), a UNESCO World Heritage site, is internationally recognized for its exceptional biodiversity, cultural heritage, and ecological significance. While the East African Crude Oil Pipeline (EACOP) does not directly cross the NCA, both the pother[illegible] route and NCA fall within Tanzania's internal Drainage Basin (IDB) – a closed watershed where all water remains within the basin rather tloving to the sea. This nydorologi[illegible]nection means hret

HYDROLOGICAL LINKAGES

Shared Watershed
Both EACOP's route and the NCA lie within the IDB.

Lake Eyasi Basin
The pipeline crosses approximately 235 km within the Lake Eyasi Drainage Basin, with the Qosest point to the lake being about 100

Water Flow Into NCA
Scientific assessments show that most of the Ngprongore waters originate as faintall outside the crater and flow into the basin via surfece and groundwater.

Spill Risk
An oll spill or leak into Lake Eyasi could concentrate contaminants that eventually reach ecosystems within the NCA.

ECOSYSTEM AND COMMUNITY VULNERABILITIES

Biodiversity
The NCA is home to globally significant wildlife, including endangered species.

Dry Climate Sensitivity
Water sources are limited, making contamination risks particularly severe.

Community Livelihoods
Indigenous pastoralist and tarning communities depend on clean water for survival.

Cultural Neritage
Poilution could disrupt traditional land-use systems that have persisted for centuries.

RECOMMENDATIONS

EACOP ESIA Limitations
The Tanzania Environmental and Social Impact Assessment acknowledges the pipeline's location within the IDB

GAPS IN CURRENT ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENTS

EACOP ESIA Limitations
The Tanzania environmental and Social Impact Assessment acknowledges the pipeline's iocation within the IDB

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EACOP Poses a Silent Threat to Ngorongoro, We Need a Full Environmental Assessment Now

by **UG STANDARD EDITOR | UG STANDARD EDITORIAL** — 15/07/2025 in **OpED** Reading Time: 2 mins read

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By Cirrus Kabale

This week as the world leaders and conservation experts are meeting in Paris, France for the 47th session of the UNESCO World Heritage Committee, taking place from 6th to 16th July 2025. One of the key discussions focused on the progress of the strategy for World Heritage in Africa. During this session, concerns were raised about the potential impact of the East African Crude Oil Pipeline (EACOP) on protected natural areas particularly the Ngorongoro Conservation Area (NCA) in Tanzania.

September 30, 2025

COMMUNIQUE: UGANDANS CANNOT TRUST STUDIES AND FINDINGS BY TOTALENERGIES ON OIL IMPACTS ON MURCHISON FALLS NATIONAL PARK

1. INTRODUCTION

On September 23, 2025, Africa Institute for Energy Governance (AFIEGO) held meetings with oil-affected communities from Hoima and Buliisa districts. Among others, the meetings discussed the environmental, social and economic challenges faced by communities due to the ongoing oil exploitation activities in Uganda. AFIEGO also held discussions on the aforementioned subject with civil society partners.

The meetings and discussions were organised following an article titled, *Murchison Falls Wildlife Safe from Oil Activities –Experts,* being published in the *New Vision* newspaper of August 28, 2025. In the article, the *New Vision* informed the public that TotalEnergies in partnership with Uganda Wildlife Authority (UWA), Uganda Conservation Society, the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) and others had conducted a survey and concluded that oil activities under the Tilenga oil project were not having a negative impact on wildlife in Murchison Falls National Park (MFNP).

Oil-affected community members and civil society groups discussed the above survey and observed as follows.

2. OBSERVATIONS

(a) **Elephant movements:** First, the community members and civil society partners noted that the *New Vision* reported that experts had collared 15 elephants in MFNP in 2020 and monitored their movements. The experts reportedly observed that none of the collared

elephants were seen grazing outside of the park ecosystem, leading them to conclude that oil activities were not affecting the movement of elephants.

(b) **Community complaints:** The survey came after communities that live near MFNP in Buliisa and Nwoya districts complained about an increase in elephant-human conflicts after oil activities started in MFNP. At a public hearing that was held on the Environmental and Social Impact Assessment (ESIA) for TotalEnergies' Tilenga oil project in Nwoya district in November 2018, community leaders observed that communities had experienced more elephant-human conflicts since oil activities started, which had led to the destruction of croplands.

(c) **Deaths experienced:** Further, communities in Buliisa district started complaining about increased elephant-human conflicts resulting in death in 2022. Since then, seven people in Buliisa have died due to the conflicts. Two others have been injured. In addition, by April 2025, over 612 claims by community members who lost crops to elephant-human conflicts in only one village in Buliisa district had been filed with village leaders. Owing to all the above, community and civil society members wondered why the survey sponsored by TotalEnergies concluded that oil exploitation activities had not affected the movement of elephants.

Upcoming Events

October 7, 2025; Buhuuka Parish: Petition to Kingfisher Project Developers to address challenges faced by Kingfisher Host Communities

October 24, 2025; Online: Launch a documentary on the impacts of oil activities on the community livelihoods and environment.

November 4-7, 2025; Bunyoro: Field exchange learning visits for university students to communities affected by oil projects

November 17-20, 2025; Bunyoro region and Masaka region: Meeting with Community Champions to Discuss Emerging Issues Relating to Oil Impacts in the Area in Buliisa.

December 12, 2025; Kampala: Staff workshop on project outcome harvesting

December 19, 2025; Kampala: STREC staff end of year annual meeting

Our Vision:

A society that promotes equitable utilization and sustainable governance of natural resources for socio-economic development..

Our Mission:

To promote the sustainable management of the natural resources in Uganda and the Great Lakes Region.

About STREC

Strategic Response on Environmental Conservation **(STREC)** is a youth led community-based not-for-profit organisation dedicated to promoting the sustainable management of the environment and natural resources in Uganda.

We started in 2018 as University environment group to protect Bugoma Central Forest Reserve from destruction for sugarcane plantation.

In 2020, we registered with the National NGO Bureau as not for profit organization.

STREC monitors government actions, conducts research, provides educational materials, develops science-based strategies, organizes affected communities, rallies other civil society organizations and international organizations to common causes, and engages government officials at all levels to ensure that natural resources are utilised in a way that leads to equitable development, environmental conservation and respect for human rights.