PROMOTING CLIMATE JUSTICE IN THE EACOP HOST COMMUNTIES: PROJECT REPORT

Introduction

The East African Crude Oil Pipeline, set to transport oil from Uganda's Lake Albert to the Tanzanian port of Tanga, has raised concerns about its social, environmental, and economic implications for Uganda and its neighbors. Communities along the pipeline route, spanning across 10 districts in Uganda, including Hoima, Kikuube, Kakumiro, Kyankwanzi, Mubende, Gomba, Sembabule, Lwengo, Rakai, and Kyotera, are facing unprecedented challenges. The pipeline poses significant threats to livelihoods, water sources, and critical ecosystems, while also accelerating the climate crisis.

The EACOP project has severe impacts on communities and the environment. Many of the relocated people (PAPs) remain uncompensated, while others have lost their sources of livelihood, including farmland, grazing land, and access to natural resources. The pipeline risks contaminating critical water sources, exacerbating existing water scarcity issues. Additionally, the pipeline traverses forests, wildlife habitats, and other sensitive ecosystems, threatening biodiversity and ecosystem services.

The project's environmental consequences are further compounded by its significant contribution to climate change. The EACOP project will emit over 32 million metric tons of carbon dioxide annually, accelerating the climate crisis and exacerbating existing climate-related vulnerabilities. This has severe implications for communities already struggling with climate-related shocks, including droughts, floods, and changing weather patterns.

The EACOP project has led to widespread human rights violations, including the right to land and property, livelihoods, clean water, and a healthy environment. Communities have been displaced, and their land and property rights have been ignored. The pipeline has destroyed sources of livelihood, exacerbating poverty and food insecurity. Furthermore, the pipeline poses significant risks to water sources and critical ecosystems, threatening the very foundations of community life.

In response to these concerns, Fridays for Future Uganda, in partnership with Community Transformation Foundation Network (COTFONE), a community-based network, implemented a project titled "Promoting Climate Justice in EACOP Host Communities" in the Greater Masaka Region. The project aimed to amplify the voices of local communities affected by the EACOP pipeline, emphasizing the importance of environmental conservation and highlighting the impacts of the pipeline on local livelihoods. By engaging with local communities, particularly project-affected people, the project sought to raise awareness about environmental conservation and climate justice as well as learn about their experiences and concerns.

Methodology

The project was implemented from February 5th to 7th, 2025. During this period, a total of 162 people were engaged, with the majority being project-affected persons (PAPs). The project team conducted community meetings in each of the three districts with specific groups, including the project-affected persons, farmers, women, and youth, to gather detailed information on their concerns and experiences. The team facilitated interactive sessions, focusing on environmental conservation and restoration. These sessions showcased local best practices in environmental conservation and facilitated open discussions about the East African Crude Oil Pipeline. To ensure the message reached a wider audience, the team distributed informative leaflets, enabling attendees to share the information with their respective communities. One-on-one interviews were also conducted with key stakeholders, including local leaders, community members, and directly impacted people, to gather more in-depth information.The mobilization efforts were undertaken with increased security awareness, given the prevailing security threats in EACOP host communities, particularly those targeting civil society organizations and human rights defenders

Findings

The project revealed significant concerns and impacts of EACOP on local communities in the Greater Masaka Region. The project's findings highlighted the environmental, social, and economic implications of the EACOP pipeline.

One of the major environmental concerns expressed by communities was the fear of pollution, particularly of air and water sources, due to potential oil spills. Participants referred to pipelines in other countries and the hazards they had introduced in natural ecosystems. Moreover , wetlands were encroached upon without compensation, as reported by Mr. Ssebona Godfrey, the LC1 of Kibanyi village, who claimed that the stream and wetland on his land were not compensated for, allegedly being government land. The pipeline's construction could also lead to land degradation and loss of fertility, affecting agricultural productivity. In Ssembabule, for instance, many coffee farmers lost their land, and although Total Energies offered them coffee seedlings, they were withered and delivered too late to be planted

Furthermore, the region's diverse ecosystems, including forests and wetlands, are under threat. The project has already caused massive tree cutting for the construction of the camp and air pad in Ssembabule, with no offsetting measures in place. Roadside trees were also cut to make way for the road, and the biggest Fig tree (Ficus Natalensis) locally known as the *Mutuba* tree in Lwengo was cut down. In response to economic instability, people have resorted to cutting down saplings (trees with a diameter of 1-4 inches) for charcoal.

There are numerous social and economic concerns among local communities. One of the major concerns was displacement and resettlement, with people being displaced without adequate compensation to rebuild their livelihoods and being detached from their cultural heritage. This has raised concerns about the right to land and property. There were reports of accidents caused by heavy trucks, and some community members had lost land during road construction with no compensation offered. Ms. Prossy Asiimwe and Mr. Twesigyemukama Elifaz, whose houses lie along the Kagango road connecting the EACOP camp to the construction site of the air pad, reported that their houses have been cracked due to the ongoing construction, with no one taking responsibility.

Additionally, the potential environmental impacts of the pipeline could also lead to increased costs for healthcare and other services.

The employment opportunities created by the project have been limited, with a few locals being hired only as casual laborers. Mr. Kato Ziiwa Damian, a worker at the EACOP camp, reported that the requirements for these jobs were strict and the application process was online, excluding those without internet access. Even casual service providers, such as barbers, faced expensive and bureaucratic permit processes.

Communities emphasized the need for fair compensation and benefits, arguing that the current compensation is inadequate. They reported that the government had promised support through alternative livelihoods and education, but this has not materialized. Instead, many were coerced into signing for low compensation, with some, like Mr. Evalisto Kigundu, reporting that they were threatened and forced to give up their land for minimal compensation. Some communities received food supplies, but these were not sustainable, and others reported that resources were embezzled, with people being forced to share seedlings while signing for larger amounts

The project also uncovered significant concerns regarding the impacts of EACOP on human and land rights. Communities felt that they had not been adequately informed or consulted about the pipeline project, leading to mistrust and concerns about the

project's impacts. The surveying team misrepresented the pipeline, downplaying its potential effects, and the formal consultations and capacity-building sessions only highlighted the project's benefits without discussing potential risks.

Communities expressed fears of human rights violations following the resistance towards compensation. They reported that some community members had been coerced into spying on others. This has created a climate of fear, with some community members withdrawing from court cases due to intimidation. Furthermore, some residents reported being bribed with tokens, such as T-shirts and caps, to secure their loyalty.

The pipeline also poses a threat to communities' cultural heritage and right to self-determination. Mr. Frank Muzeei, a resident of Rakai, reported that his family graveyard, containing 60 tombs, had been dug up, highlighting the project's disregard for community cultural heritage.

Challenges

- The project faced security concerns, as some community members encountered intimidation and were skeptical about gatherings. To ensure the safety of the team and community members, certain terms and concepts were carefully rephrased to avoid attracting unwanted scrutiny.

- Many community members lacked awareness about environmental conservation, their rights, and the potential impacts of the EACOP pipeline. This knowledge gap hindered their interest in environmental conservation, requiring significant effort to educate and raise awareness among community members.

Recommendations

- Support sustainable community-led initiatives, prioritizing clean water sources and sanitation facilities, irrigation systems and climate-resilient agriculture, and community nursery beds and reforestation programs.
- Promote alternative energy sources to reduce dependence on wood fuel in households.
- Offset biodiversity loss by planting native tree species and restoring habitats that have been cleared during the construction.

- Organize regular sessions to educate communities on their rights, potential risks and impacts of the EACOP project and strategies for effective advocacy and community mobilization
- Support grassroots activists and champions of change as well as providing legal empowerment and aid for PAPs.

Conclusion

The Promoting Climate Justice in EACOP Host Communities project has shed light on the significant environmental, social, and economic concerns surrounding the East African Crude Oil Pipeline (EACOP) project in the Greater Masaka Region. The project's findings highlight the need for urgent attention to the impacts of the EACOP pipeline on local communities, including displacement, water pollution, land degradation, loss of biodiversity, and human rights violations. The project's construction has already led to significant social and economic impacts, including increased poverty and food insecurity. Communities are demanding fair compensation and benefits, including support for alternative livelihoods and education.

Furthermore, it demonstrates the importance of community-led initiatives in promoting climate justice and advocating for human rights. The project's findings and recommendations will inform future initiatives aimed at mitigating the impacts of the EACOP pipeline and promoting sustainable development in the region.

Appendices


Promoting Climate
Justice in EAC2P
host Communities
Campaign
Together
We Can Mak
A Difference