

Tree Talk Plus

Branching out to empower communities

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COVID-19 is for human beings, as SUGARCANE is for forests!

The lockdown and the fate of Bugoma Forests

Part of Bugoma Central Forest Reserve is contested. The Bunyoro Kitara Kingdom (BKK) claims ownership. And as such, granted a lease to a company interested in growing sugarcane. Stakeholders have argued that the issuance of the lease was illegal. Consequently the National Forestry Authority took BKK and the sugarcane company to court. Since then, there has been a legal ping pong and battle. Those with a stake kept track of the legal combat. However with the COVID-19 outbreak, and the lockdown, many stakeholders are uninformed of what is happening behind the scenes. In fact, the contested area, may soon be opened up. **Bugoma needs your voice.**

From Natural Forest to Sugarcane Estate

Uganda has not lost any patient to COVID-19, but as we speak, we are about to loose part of Bugoma Central Forest Reserve partly due to the COVID-19 lockdown.

Forest managers and supervisors were not considered 'an essential service' and therefore all actors have been kept in the lockdown. That way, the second wave of attack on Bugoma, ensued. What we hear and see on social media, scares us to the born.

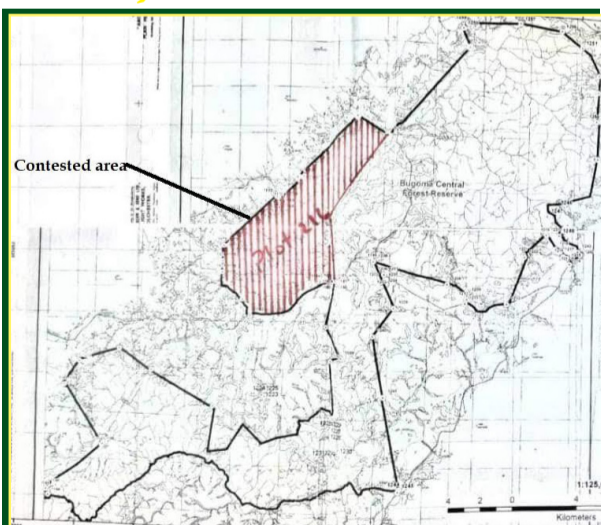
Through 2018 and 2019, media reports about Bugoma were wide spread. President Museveni intervened and pledged to resolve the matter and find a lasting solution. However, it has emerged that during the lockdown, court restrained the National Forestry Authority from further deployment of soldiers and the Environment Police in

the contested area through a court order.

Court further ordered that the developer be allowed to develop the land, even before the disposal of outstanding cases. This is seen as a licence to go ahead and cut down the forest, to pave way for the planting of sugarcane. This is what baffles many

- The Ministry of Water and Environment has refrained from pronouncing itself on this matter.
- Mainstream media has been muscled out of the Bugoma debate leaving it to 'social media'.
- The National Forestry Authority is overwhelmed. It cries fowl by courts of law, politicking by leaders and lack of political support citing the recent directive to degazette Kyalubanga Forest Reserve as an example.

- The National Environment Management Authority is left speechless as its directive to undertake an environmental impact assessment by the developer fell on deaf ears. .
 - The Uganda People's Defence Forces continue to confuse the public; at one time they guard the interests of conversation, and on another, they are guarding the sugarcane developer.
 - Civil society have resorted to discussing COVID-19, Gender-Based Violence that are trending topics.
 - Bunyoro-Kitara Kingdom is lost within its house; incapacitated to recall the lease offered to the sugar company.
 - President Museveni is busy with COVID-19, the lorry drivers who import COVID-19 and the Bazukulu girls eloping with lorry drivers known to import the virus.
- Bugoma needs your voice**



What is @ stake?

- The image of the forest sector is at stake; pointing to the lack of rule of law in the sector.
- As water levels surge in all water bodies, forests and wetlands have been earmarked reserviors for water; therefore Bugoma highly needed.
- The conservation of Bugoma Forest is integral to the lives of local communities (climate, water sources, firewood, medicines, fruits among others).
- Destroying the habitat will release wildlife to the remaining patches on private land; triggering human-wildlife conflicts.
- Compromising investment in eco-tourism with forest lodges such as Jungle Lodge left at jeopardy.
- Investments in environment restoration programs will be compromised.
- Petroleum developments in the neighbouring landscape continue to pressurise conservation and therefore Bugoma should be spared.
- Hydropower production downstream river Wambabya will be affected.



COVID-19!
 a threat to our forests.



SAVE BUGOMA FOREST CAMPAIGN

PROTECT UGANDAN CHIMPANZEES, LET'S BATTLE FOR LIFE