

THE EAST AFRICAN SUSWATCH E-BULLETIN

(FORMERLY THE LVEMPII CIVIL SOCIETY WATCH E BULLETIN)

A *Monthly* from the East African Sustainability Watch Network founded by Uganda Coalition for Sustainable Development (UCSD), Tanzania Coalition for Sustainable Development (TCSD) and SusWatch Kenya

Dialogue Calls on African Governments and Agencies to recognize the Scale of Climate Change and Prioritize the People



Over forty participants from across Africa attended a Civil society policy dialogue meeting prior to the seventeenth regular session of the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment (AMCEN) organized by the Pan Africa Climate Justice Alliance (PACJA) and OXFAM, that took place from 11 to 15 November 2019 in Durban, South Africa.

These included leaders, experts and think tanks, practitioners drawn from the Africa Development Bank, Africa Group of Negotiators, Small scale farmers, small businesses, actors and change makers from Africa. The theme of the dialogue was: Our Own Solutions: ‘Taking Responsibility to Reduce Vulnerability in the Face of Climate Change’ with the purpose of advancing the case for an urgent action in response to the state of food security in the Southern African Region post the cyclones, advance the humanitarian needs in the Horn of Africa and call on Africa leaders to increase their targets to deliver on promises –made in the Paris Climate Agreement (and New York) – to keep global warming below 1.5°C.

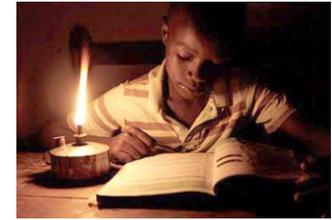
The joint communique to the seventeenth regular session of the African Ministerial Conference on Environment and Natural Resources released after the meeting, call upon African governments to acknowledge that we face an urgent climate crisis and push for all countries to recognize the scale of the climate challenge, and the need for a fair and ambitious global effort to achieve the Paris Agreed 1.5°C goal

‘The world is now over 1°C warmer than the average for 1850-1900. Africa is particularly vulnerable. This year we have experienced unprecedented extreme weather events, including two hurricanes devastating Mozambique and neighboring countries, widespread flooding across East, Central and West Africa, and intense and prolonged drought in Southern Africa. The COP25 in Madrid should deliver a mandate for all countries to enhance their mitigation actions in line with the 1.5°C goal and build their climate resilience,’ the statement reads in part.

The statement flags out the lack of progress with regard to financial commitments from the developed countries to developing nations as contained in the Paris Agreement. ‘The Adaptation Finance Gap Report’, estimated that US\$140 –300 billion only in adaptation financing will be needed by 2030, with between USD 280 –500 billion per year needed by 2050. It therefore calls on developed countries to provide climate finance in line with Article 9 of the Paris Agreement, and to meet and go beyond the \$100bn by 2020 goal, including delivering a 50:50 balance between financial support for mitigation and adaptation (through grant and not loans). The statement further calls on African countries to prioritize the agency of people in addressing the issue of climate change and protect citizens and the environment against adverse effects resulting from climate change among other environmental challenges that is caused by the neo liberal economic model.

Read the Joint communique on the 17th African Ministerial Conference on Environment and Natural Resources from here: <https://bit.ly/33zuuh2>

Tree Cover Loss and Extreme Weather Patterns Worry Nebbi Leaders



From L to R: Location of Nebbi (West Nile, Uganda); Kucwiny subcounty leaders after the awareness seminar (Photo: JEEP) & a boy using *Tadooba* (Kerosene) lamp responsible for indoor pollution, to read (photo: *The Sunrise* (Uganda))

Joint Energy and Environment Projects (JEEP) carried out an awareness seminar for 49 sub county political and technical leaders from Parombo and Kucwiny Sub-counties in Nebbi district. The seminar aimed to introduce the East African Civil Society for Sustainable Energy and Climate Action (EASE&CA) project (July 2018 to June 2022) to the sub county leaders, build rapport and secure their support in implementation of this project that is being implemented in Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda.

During the seminar participants discussed the major environmental issues affecting Nebbi district. These include the misuse of wetlands and the heavy dependence on fuel wood as the sole source of energy for cooking and lighting, whose supply is steadily dwindling. One seminar participant noted that, ‘There is hardly any firewood left. When you see bundles, sticks are thin, heap of charcoal on sale is small and expensive. It is high time to move in with energy saving stoves and planting of new trees. No time to waste.’ Moreover, the EASE & CA district baseline study carried out by JEEP (September 2019), established that 77% of the people interviewed in Nebbi district were cooking inefficiently using the 3stone stoves, and none of them was using hydro-electric power. In fact, the baseline established that people have resorted to using inferior fuels like farm residues like twigs, cassava stems and maize cobs.

Other issues raised lack of access to clean energy for lighting, with many people still using *Tadooba* (small metallic lamp that uses kerosene) that has indoor health pollution risks. In addition, participants noted that climate change as evidenced in unpredictable weather changes (extended droughts and sporadic rains) have increased. As one participants concluded, ‘It rains too much, even when it should be dry’. It is in this regard that JEEP is implementing the EASE & CA project, in cooperation with the Nordic Folkecenter for Renewable Energy, International Network for Sustainable Energy, Uganda Coalition for Sustainable Development, Tanzania Traditional Energy Development Organisation and Sustainable Environment Development Watch Kenya.

The main objective of the EASE & CA project is to increase access to sustainable energy and other climate solutions to local communities in Uganda, Kenya and Tanzania with both women’s and men’s full and effective participation and leadership for improved livelihoods and reduction of poverty. This will be realised by combining Civil Society Organization (CSO) activities on local, national and international levels in ways, where they reinforce each other. Specifically, JEEP’s intervention seeks to empower poor rural communities in Nebbi, Nakasongola and Nakaseke districts in Uganda, and in East Africa more generally to get access to clean energy and improved livelihoods in an economic and climate friendly way as well as to refine methods from previous projects to realise this.

Nebbi district is located in North-Western Uganda West Nile Sub-region that borders the democratic Republic of Congo. While arable land is 62%, almost 1/3 of it is covered by game reserves, while swamps and open water cover 6.4% of the land and forest reserves cover 2.5%.

#WhiteAlert: Kenya's Public Unease over Aflatoxins Should Spread in East Africa



Mycotoxins are secondary fungal compounds with a potential to have adverse effects on humans and animals. Aflatoxins is a group of mycotoxins that are of concern to sub-Saharan Africa. They are naturally occurring toxins, recognized by a gray-green or yellow-green mold growing on corn kernels in the field or in poor grain storage conditions. Plant stress due to drought, heat or insect damage during the growing season usually increases aflatoxin levels. In addition to being a 'silent poison', aflatoxin contamination will reduce feeding value and hinder sales.

Photo: ScienceDirect.com

In Kenya, an exposé by NTV Investigations Desk on aflatoxin contamination of maize products has caused a wave of panic and concern in Kenya. Dubbed: The 'White Alert' this expose highlighted the dangerously high amounts of the fungi, which is known to cause various cancers, in Kenya's staple food (Maize flour / *Ugali*). It came a day after Kenya Bureau of Standards (KEBS) suspended licenses of five maize millers over the sale of aflatoxin-contaminated flour. As a result, on November 7, 2019, the Uganda National Bureau of Standards took a 'knee-jerk' response. It suspended the importation, sale and distribution of the 7 peanut butter products from Kenya citing laboratory tests carried out by KEBS confirmed high levels of aflatoxin contamination.

But according a Makerere University research article 'Mycotoxins contamination in foods consumed in Uganda: A 12-year review (2006–18)' published at the start of 2019, the aflatoxin challenge is already in existence. For example, Uganda loses 577 US million dollars annually as a result of 3700 aflatoxin-induced liver cancer cases. Aflatoxins contamination of sorghum, maize and peanuts causes a decline in exports valued at 7.48 US million dollars which accounts for 45% reduction in total agricultural exports. For example, maize which is one of the important food crops is among those that have been found to be contaminated with high levels of aflatoxins in Uganda. According to the Partnership for Aflatoxin Control in Africa (PACA, 2017), maize samples from Mubende (Western Savannah agro ecological zone) had relatively higher aflatoxins levels (65 parts per billion) compared to Tororo (20 parts per billion) in the Kioga plains based on UNBS/EAC regulatory limit.

In its conclusion, the Makerere University research article warns, 'Uganda is at a risk of mycotoxicosis (toxic conditions caused by the ingestion of feed contaminated with the toxins) and immediate assessments to determine the impact of the aflatoxins in agriculture, trade and health-related costs in humans and livestock should be done'. It recommends that there should be continuous testing and effective monitoring (surveillance systems) of mycotoxins along the food chain at all times. The Government of Uganda should also provide capacity building to all relevant sectors in the food industry including the major food handlers at the house hold levels, farm level, and industries. In addition, people should be sensitized about mycotoxins including school children. In addition, all consumables and equipment used in testing and monitoring mycotoxins should be subsidized by the government to make them accessible and affordable. There is a need to conduct further studies on mycotoxins in the region. It is also imperative that regulatory programmes for monitoring mycotoxins levels in foodstuffs are developed and implemented.

In Tanzania, various studies carried out have indicated that 25 - 45 % of maize is contaminated by aflatoxin (African Development Bank, 2018). A Tanzania Country situational assessment on the aflatoxin problem conducted with the support from Partnership for Aflatoxin Control in Africa confirmed low level of awareness on aflatoxin issues, limited access to guidelines for good agricultural practices and poor storage were behind the prevalence of aflatoxin in maize and groundnuts grown and consumed in Tanzania. Also policies and strategies are absent to combat this problem which creates health and nutritional problems.