RESIDENTS SPEAK OUT ON BUGOMA

BIG CONCERN
For a forest with more than 600 chimpanzees, 200 bird species and part of its wealth, Bugoma, located in Hoima and Kikyusa districts, is one of the gifts that make Uganda the Pearl of Africa. Bugoma Central Forest Reserve is also a catchment for rivers that flow into Lake Albert. Gerald Tenywa interacted with the local people and traditional leaders about the move to grow sugarcane in part of Bugoma.

Moses Ashimwe, Resident of Kabaale in Hoima
Bugoma forest and chimpanzees are not going to put food on our able. Hoima sugar is going to help us get out of poverty. Why is it that people living far from this forest are more concerned about the negative environmental consequences more than us?

Isaac Kalembe, Speaker of Orurukarto
The land where Hoima Sugar Limited is operating belongs to Orukamuka of Bunyoro, Gafusha Iru. It is not part of Bugoma forest, but I disagree with cutting down forests to plant sugarcane. I have been planting indigenous trees on my land and I will continue planting trees for posterity.

Steven Nyakojo, Resident of Kitole Village, Kabwoya Sub-county, Hoima District
I grew up seeing the wild animals, including chimpanzees. They used to come to a small forest behind our home that has since disappeared. The chimps no longer come here. I got angry when I got the bad news that part of Bugoma was going to be cut down to grow sugarcane. I wanted to protest in Hoima against the take-over of the forest, but the protest did not take place.

Lillian Naumansi, Resident of Kaseeta in Kikyusa District
Sugarcane growing is going to create employment and also improve roads in our community. We have been living with elephants (chimpanzees) without change in our lives. The changes we have seen have become because of oil but no one in my area is going to get employment in the oil industry. Let us try sugarcane growing for the better.

Patrick Iyemba, Golo Golo, Kigungu Chiefdom in Busoga
The worst case scenario today is about sugarcane growing in Busoga where we have four industries. The sugarcane growing has turned our subject and the cultural leaders into beggars. Busoga has the worst food insecurity, low income, and domestic violence. This has resulted in poverty, diseases, early marriages and pregnancies.

Sugarcane growing is similar to a curse and Bunyoro kingdom should not give up Bugoma to sugarcane growing.

Nelson Mugisha, Resident of Kidoma in Hoima
I do not support the investors who want to grow sugarcane in Bugoma forest. This is because the streams and rivers in Bugoma will dry up. People can live without sugar, but it is difficult to live here without the forest. Bugoma is a rainmaker which waters our fields. Without Bugoma, the farmers will need irrigation to grow crops which is.

Oketcho Chombo, Minister of Agriculture and Environment, Tieng Adhola Cultural Institution
Cultural institutions are custodians of culture and the environment. This is because our totems are either plants or animals that stay in forests like Bugoma. The forests are a source of medicine and they are rainmakers. We have come to offer support to our elders in Bunyoro kingdom because most kingdoms in Uganda originated from Bunyoro kingdom.

Yafesi Kaaahwa, Bugogo Village, Kabwoya Sub-county in Kikyusa
Growing sugarcane in Bugoma is going to disrupt the wildlife there. The animals in Bugoma have a big tourism potential. We formed a group to protect the environment because the climate is changing, even with Bugoma standing. What will happen when the forest is gone? I do not support growing sugarcane in Bugoma. If Bugoma has some spaces, they should plant indigenous trees to help it recover. Growing sugarcane in the reserve is going to destroy Bugoma for good.

Kasizi Atuhura, a Resident of Hoima
Chimpanzees have been staying out of Bugoma because the forest has failed to meet their dietary needs. And the part of Bugoma which has been invaded by investors has the highest concentration of chimpanzees. The encroachment on Bugoma is going to endanger the survival of chimpanzees in Bugoma.

A site of charcoal burning in Bugoma forest. Scan the pictures bearing icons using the New Vision Digital Experience to watch video.