



YCED



QUARTERLY Update

Advancing Climate Reparations,
Human Rights, and Energy
Transition

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WELCOME TO OUR QUARTERLY DISPATCH

We are excited to release our newsletter which sheds light on the major events that transpired between August 2025- February 2026, These includes our advocacy at the regional level with the second Africa Climate Summit, the continued crackdown on environmental defenders in Uganda, the importance of protecting these defenders and promoting a safe and enabling environment through .

We hope that this newsletter contributes to a better understanding of the issues faced by environmental human rights defenders and informs efforts to protect and support them. The repression that environmental activists who use peaceful civil disobedience are currently facing in Uganda is a major threat to democracy and human rights. We need to understand the triple planetary crisis (Climate change, pollution and bio-diversity loss) we are collectively facing that cannot be addressed if those raising the alarm and demanding action are criminalized for it.

This report provides the situation of all land and Environmental Human Rights Defenders in challenging corporate impunity arising from land acquisition and compensation for the Tilenga and EACOP projects in respect for free, prior and informed consent (FPIC) for land rights and the project's impact on nature. In the same spirit it provides the plight of our continued media engagement on the issues inhibiting our development agenda as a country

It further sheds light on our grassroots engagements with oil host districts (Hoima and Buliisa districts) on mechanisms for responsible business conduct by corporate entities for seeking remedy to vulnerable communities whose land rights have been violated by Tilenga and EACOP projects in Uganda, these alternative avenues for seeking remedy include targeting the financiers of these projects but also continuous Monitoring, Documentation and Reporting of these issues.

Yours Sincerely:



Imam Mugisha

Executive Director **YCED**

1.0: INTRODUCTION:

In this quarterly dispatch, learn about stories of resilience from the grassroots communities resisting corporate impunity by oil and Gas companies in Uganda, updates from our advocacy for community led energy transition at the 2nd Africa Climate Summit 2025.



Figure 1: Grassroot environmental defenders pose for a group photo shortly after training on responsible Business conduct

YCED AT COP30; OUTCOMES AND DISAPPOINTMENTS.

The 2025 UN climate talks wrapped on 22nd November 2026 after negotiations pushed into overtime. The outcomes secured some important wins, both inside and outside the negotiations. But it omitted some of the big-ticket items many hoped to see. With efforts to halt temperature rise severely off-track and climate disasters becoming destructive, the summit (COP30) aimed to establish clear pathways to deliver past pledges and put the world on a safer track. A key question was how countries would address new commitments (NDCs). Hopes that countries would commit to roadmaps to end fossil fuel use and halt deforestation were ultimately dashed after opposition from petro states. The final decision only included new voluntary initiatives to accelerate national climate action, though the Brazilian Presidency intends to move forward with fossil fuel and deforestation roadmaps outside of the formal COP talks.

Building resilience to climate impacts took center stage, with COP30 securing a new target to triple adaptation finance. The COP30 also laid out practical solutions to increase finance for the low-carbon transition. In an era of trade wars and tariffs, negotiators also agreed for the first time to hold discussions on how trade policies can help or hinder climate action.

Against the backdrop of the Amazon, nature also saw advances, including a new fund for tropical forest conservation, Indigenous Peoples and other local communities were recognized like never before. And outside the formal negotiations, the summit saw a raft of new pledges and action plans from cities, states, countries and the private sector. We are moving from negotiations to implementation, and from wrangling over what to do to how to do it.

These victories matter. It shows that international cooperation can still deliver, despite deepening divides on climate action and a difficult geopolitical context. By the end of COP30, 119 countries representing 74% of global emissions had submitted new national commitments in NDCs. These commitments showed some progress on reducing emissions and mobilizing sectoral action, but they collectively deliver less than 15% of the emissions reductions required by 2035 to hold global temperature rise to 1.5 degrees C. UN analysis finds that even with the latest NDCs and current policies, the world remains on course for 2.3–2.8 degrees C of warming, a dangerous prospect that's well above the Paris Agreement's temperature benchmarks.

This emissions gap shaped expectations heading into COP30, with countries seeking a credible response to the NDC shortfall. A central and politically charged issue was how the world would address the continued use of fossil fuels, the root cause of the climate crisis. More than 80 countries advocated for a global roadmap to guide this transition, but negotiators ultimately failed to include it in the final decision, stymied by opposition from several countries in particular, major petro states.

Instead, COP30 launched two new initiatives, under the guidance of the COP Presidencies: a Global Implementation Accelerator and the "Belem Mission to 1.5" to enhance and speed the implementation of countries' NDCs and national adaptation plans (NAPs) and keep 1.5 degrees C within reach.

Neither of these voluntary initiatives directly mention fossil fuels, disappointing countries seeking clearer direction. However, the language for the Accelerator does include a thin thread linking it to the Global Stocktake commitments made at COP28 in Dubai, thus implicitly referring to the language adopted there on a just, orderly transition away from fossil fuels.

The Brazilian COP30 president also announced that it will develop roadmaps to transition away from fossil fuels and tackle deforestation in its own capacity. It's ultimately up to Brazil President Lula da Silva and the COP presidency to advance these global plans in a robust and inclusive way.

Looking ahead to next year, the Global Implementation Accelerator will hold open information sessions in June and November before delivering a report and high-level meetings at COP31 in November 2026. The Belém Mission to 1.5 will follow a similar timeline and likewise report its conclusions at COP31. In parallel, the COP30 Presidency's roadmap development will be informed by external consultations, including an April meeting on transitioning away from fossil fuels, co-hosted by the Colombian and Dutch governments



Figure 2: Delegates holding placards while attending the Belém Climate Summit ahead of the United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP30) in Belém, Brazil, November 7, 2026.

ENHANCING RESPONSIBLE BUSINESS CONDUCT IN UGANDA'S OIL AND GAS SECTOR

A major project is currently underway in East Africa, led by French oil major TotalEnergies. The East African Crude Oil Pipeline (EACOP), the longest heated pipeline in the world, which will span 1,443 kilometers. It will run through Uganda and Tanzania and is linked to two oil extraction projects in Uganda (the Tilenga and Kingfisher projects, the latter operated by Chinese company CNOOC).

The EACOP traverses through reserves and protected areas, endangering unique and highly fragile ecosystems which host a number of protected species, some threatened with extinction. The pipeline also represents a threat to Africa's biggest freshwater basin, Lake Victoria Basin, which supports a population of 40 million people. In addition, the risk of an oil spill is very high on the Tanzanian coast, which is prone to tsunamis due to the region's high seismic activity.

In addition, IPCC scientists have made it abundantly clear that any hope of limiting the global temperature rise to 1.5°C by 2050 requires that fossil fuels be kept in the ground. Yet if the EACOP goes ahead, it will generate up to 34.3 million tons of CO₂ per year, far more than the emissions of Uganda and Tanzania combined. Considering the disastrous consequences such a project would have on the environment, the climate and on humankind, the project is being met with huge resistance from both the local and international community. The directly affected communities are acting on the front line, supported by local organizations denouncing human rights violations and environmental risks. But they are facing a harsh backlash: several community leaders and NGO members have been threatened or arrested, organizations have been shut down and certain individuals that have expressed opposition to Total's project have been hunted down, forcing them into hiding.

This project will legally empower community Based Climate justice activists affected by East African Crude Pipeline (EACOP) project; it will also represent these communities in the courts of law for the on-going case hearing. The project will target Youth Climate Justice Activists and Environmental Human rights Defenders working in Buliisa District. As special group who are

disproportionately affected by rights violations because of ongoing oil project developments. Businesses and oil related institutions will be also targeted as key duty bearers who are obligated to Protect, Respect and remedy for environmental rights. On the other hand, given the convening role of local leaders, YCED will also target them as moral duty bearers to support dialogue and negotiations between oil companies and Environmental rights defenders and other CSOs.



CONTINUED MEDIA ENGAGEMENT ON DECENTRALIZED ENERGY SYSTEMS

Uganda's Vision 2040, National Development Plan, and Energy Transition Plan all place energy infrastructure at the heart of the country's economic transformation. The government's target of achieving 52,000 megawatts of installed capacity by 2040, through a diversified energy mix of hydropower, solar, wind, geothermal, and nuclear, reflects the scale of anticipated demand.

Over the past decade, Uganda's electricity sector has undergone significant transformation, The country's installed generation capacity has more than doubled from approximately 850MW in 2014 to over 2052MW in 2025 with all these developments, Access to electricity remains low despite these developments YCED engaged young people on their role in shaping energy transition, we emphasized the critical role of community engagement in energy transition, Uganda held at crossroad between producing its oil or keeping it underground as a stranded asset, understanding that the global energy transition has far-reaching repercussions: countries whose economies rely on fossil fuel extraction face the prospect of lower demand, and countries producing minerals needed for clean technologies risk the negative impacts of an unregulated mining boom.

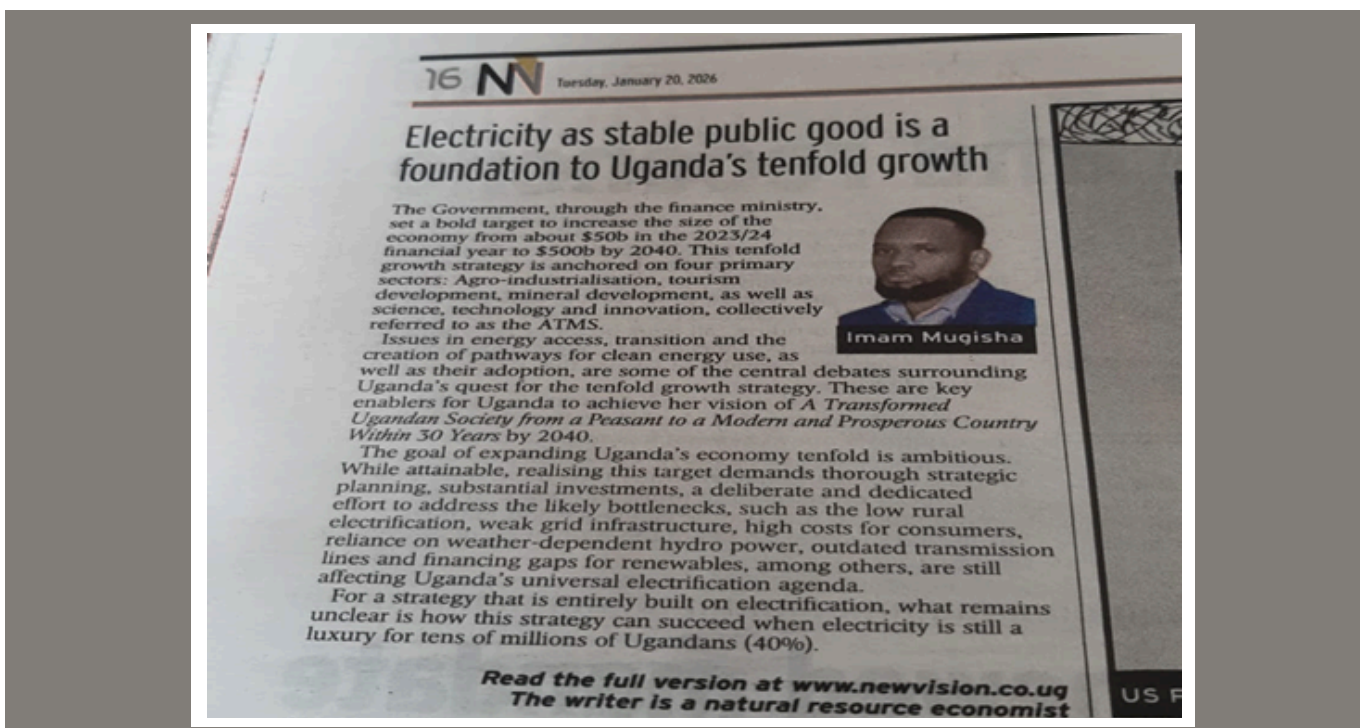


Figure 3: An extract from Uganda's leading publisher new vision showing insights from our CEO on affordable energy policies.

THE PRICE OF DEFENDING ENVIRONMENTAL RIGHTS DEFENDERS IN UGANDA.

On 6 January 2026, the bail application of the above-mentioned eight activists was heard by the Buganda Road Chief Magistrate's Court. The magistrate ruled that the matter was at an "advanced stage" and could only ensure an expeditious hearing of the defense. The hearings were initially adjourned to 14 and 16 January 2026, the latter of which was declared a public holiday to accommodate the national general elections. On 14 January, the case was adjourned for a second time to 19 January.

However, on 19 January, we were informed that the activists had not been brought to court. The newly assigned magistrate further adjourned the case again to 12 February 2026 at 11:00, citing this as the earliest available date. A warrant was also issued for the detainees. The activists will therefore be detained until this date.

We recall that on 1st August 2025, the activists were arrested during a peaceful protest in front of Stanbic Bank Head Office, Kampala, holding placards and banners with the words "Stop EACOP Uganda". They were charged under Section 65(e) of the Road Act Cap. 346 for "nuisance on roads" and remanded to Luzira Maximum Security Prison, where eight of them remain detained at the time of publication of this Urgent Appeal.

All previous bail applications were denied by the Buganda Road Chief Magistrate's Court on 18 August, 5 September, 1 October, and 16 October 2025. The court justified the denials on the grounds that some of the activists were repeat protestors and that the proceedings were already at an advanced stage.

These incidents illustrate a persistent pattern of harassment targeting those opposing EACOP and defending environmental and human rights. Environmental rights defenders in Uganda have, in recent years, repeatedly faced arbitrary arrests, judicial harassment, and torture. For example, on 9th August 2025, 47 students were arrested in Kampala during a peaceful protest against the EACOP project. Between May and June 2024, environmental activists like Adriko Sostein, Julius Tumwiine, and Stephen Kwikiriza were arrested and arbitrarily detained,

as well as Bob Barigye, Noah Katiiti, Newton Mwesigwa, Julius Byaruhanga, Desire Ndyamwesigwa, Raymond Binntukwanga, and Jealousy Mugisha Mulimbwa. Lawyer Eron Kiiza, known for his advocacy for environmental protection and rule of law, has also been targeted and detained. In April 2025, 11 environmental defenders, known as #KCB11 were arbitrarily arrested and detained following a peaceful protest denouncing the Kenyan Commercial Bank's decision to fund EACOP.

Around October 2024, the United Nations Special Rapporteur on Human Rights Defenders sent a letter to the Ugandan government, raising concern about the increasing harassment of activists opposing the EACOP, These arbitrary arrests and detentions, and acts of judicial harassment, are part of a persistent and intensive repressive trend especially ahead of the general elections held on 15 January 2026 - targeting environmental and human rights defenders and affected communities in the context of oil development projects in Uganda. This highlights a broader pattern of silencing and undermining the fundamental freedoms of peaceful assembly and expression guaranteed under Article 29 of the Constitution of Uganda and Articles 19 and 21 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR).

We strongly condemn the continued judicial harassment and the ongoing pre-trial arbitrary detention of the above-mentioned eight young climate rights defenders since 1 August 2025, which appears to be an act of reprisal for their legitimate human rights activities. We also urge the Ugandan authorities to ensure their immediate and unconditional release, and put an end to any act of harassment, including at the judicial level, against them and all the environmental human rights defenders in Uganda. Through our youth environmental movement we urge the Ugandan authorities to respect the rights of the defense as recognized by international instruments and to guarantee to the 12 climate rights defenders an impartial and independent trial.

When it comes to the future, young people have a lot at stake. And the field of Business and Human rights is no exception. Irresponsible business practices affect the prospects of young people living in a fair and livable world in the future. But they are speaking up. In many areas, youth are already playing an important role in galvanizing support for responsible business among States and businesses, from

climate activists to human rights defenders to young parliamentarians and entrepreneurs.

With the ongoing stop EACOP campaigns , we have also joined efforts with fellow land and environmental Human Right Defenders to show our dissatisfaction with the so-called development that is coming at the cost of communities, We have released several information materials on the need to implement the National Action Plan on Business and Human Rights, The NAPBHR serves a key tool in providing guidance to the State and non-State actors on the requirement that all business operations are to be conducted in line with human rights standards.

It's believed that its implementation is a measure to strengthen the State duty to protect human rights, enhance the corporate responsibility to respect human rights, and ensure access to remedy for victims of human rights violations and abuses resulting from non-compliance by business entities in the Country.



Figure 4: Environmental Rights Defenders marching KCB bank offices showing their dissatisfaction for funding EACOP; Photo Credit: Daily monitor

YOUTH COLLECTIVE ADVOCACY AROUND SAVING KITUBULU FOREST RESERVE

Late last year 2025, We launched an environmental protection campaign dubbed #SaveKitubuluForestNow. This forest reserve was controversially allocated by the Government of Uganda to a Chinese investor, Tian Tiang.

It should be known that the Kitubulu Forest, which spans several kilometers and stretches toward the shores of Lake Victoria, plays a vital ecological role. It contributes to air purification, supports local biodiversity, helps regulate rainfall, and acts as a natural buffer protecting Lake Victoria from pollution.

The forest was given away for development without a proper Environmental Social impact assessment (ESIA) and hence disregarding its crucial role in sustaining the local ecosystem. Through this campaign, we called on the Government of Uganda and the Chinese investor to halt any destructive activities, and we invited all Ugandans to stand up and protect the "lungs of Entebbe" Were we all agreed and believed that the protection of human rights begins with the protection and conservation of nature. Without a healthy environment, the right to life, health, clean water, and sustainable livelihoods cannot be fully realized.

Kitubulu forest is a legally protected forest under the National Forestry and Tree Planting Act, 2003, and holds immense ecological, cultural and community value. This allocation is a violation of environmental laws and a threat to biodiversity, climate resilience and public trust.

As environmental groups, civil society organizations, and concerned citizens, we express our strongest opposition and outline clear demands for the immediate cancellation of this allocation, accountability from government institutions and the full protection and restoration of Kitubulu.

In a letter dated 23rd December 2025 through the Ministry of water and Environment, the president of the Republic of Uganda titled: cancellation of all the titles issued in kitubulu central forest reserve.

He cited that between 2004 and 2025, the country lost 1.1 million hectares of natural forest cover under the watch of the National Forest Authority (NFA) which was established to protect these natural resources. He expressed his discomfort at the heads of such institutions who engage in corruption and allow such illegal activities in protected areas.

It's completely misuse of office for personal gains, H.E, the presidents disassociates himself from allegations that he approved the development of a shopping mall, Hotel and a mini-city within the forest reserve and called on for immediate stop of cutting of trees within the forest reserve.

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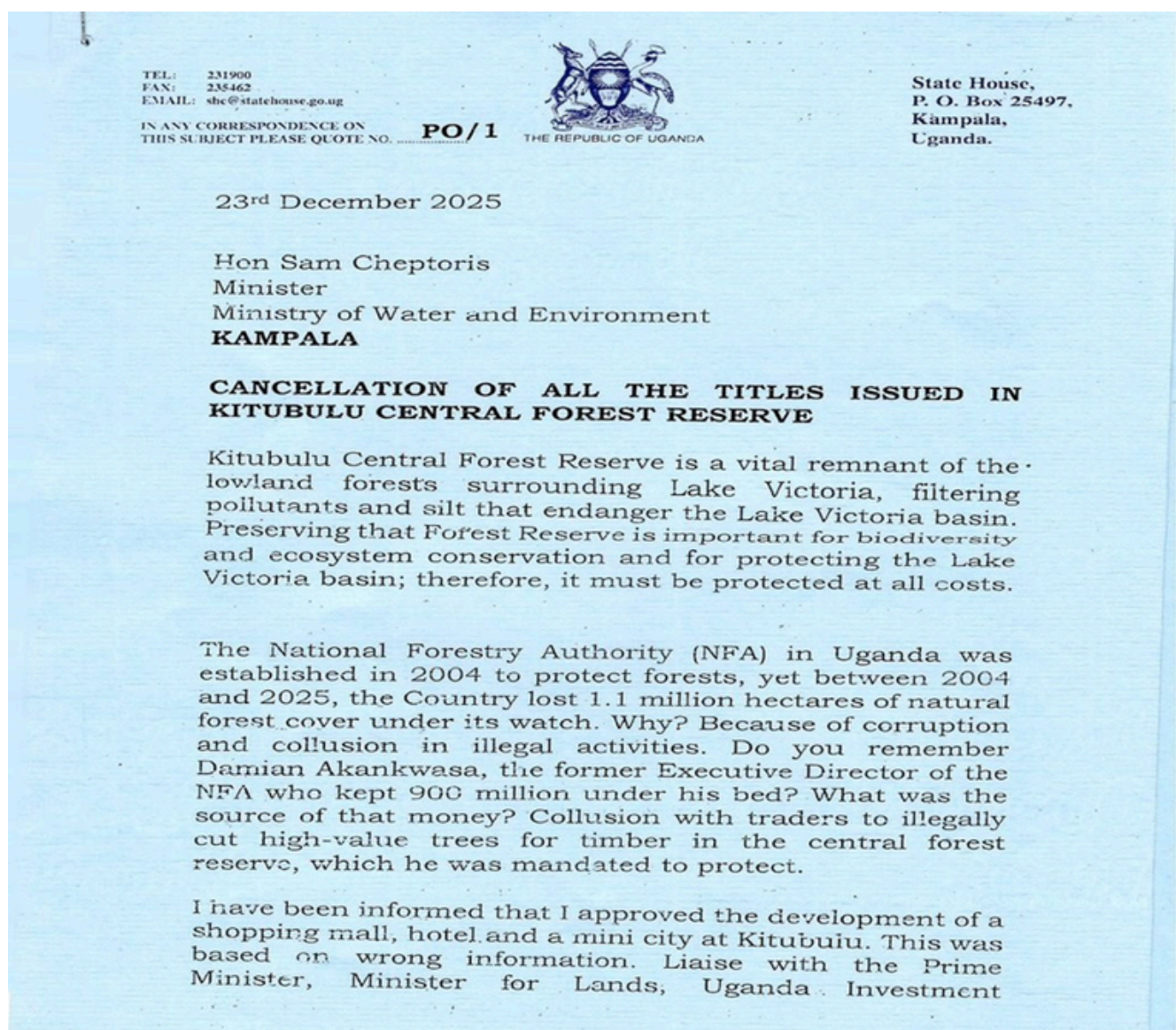


Figure 5: An extract from the presidential letter ordering the cancellation of all land titles in kitubulu forest reserve.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT ON ENERGY TRANSITION; SHAPING A COMMUNITY-DRIVEN ENERGY TRANSITION.

As we continue to drive innovation and impact across Ugandan grassroots communities in relation to a just and equitable energy transition, we're excited to share the latest milestones and opportunities shaping our collective journey towards a more sustainable, livable and resilient communities in Uganda ensuring a rapid shift away from fossil fuels to renewables, in ways that put impacted communities first. From strong community partnerships to forward-looking insights. This edition highlights the momentum building around the communities where we work and beyond, During our community engagements geared towards understanding community perspectives on energy transition, we found out that there's still a lot to do in engaging grassroots communities to create a mindset change and influence renewables energy acceptance.

A just transition to a fully renewable energy system hinges on meaningful community engagement and ensuring fair benefits from renewables for local host communities. We undertook a series of engagements in Mityana and Mubende districts in Uganda's central region to create awareness on Uganda's energy transition plan but also to understand real complex issues around adoption of renewable energy alternatives.

Putting grassroots communities at the Centre of all clean energy transitions not only improves people's lives but is also key to successfully implementing energy and climate policies. Local energy communities, or community-based energy projects, are showing clear benefits across the globe in deploying renewable technologies, improving efficiency, supporting reliable power supply, reducing bills, and generating local jobs. At the same time, these initiatives are garnering increased attention as effective vehicles towards more inclusive, equitable and resilient energy systems.

Over 90% of cooking fuel in Uganda is obtained from biomass energy, majorly firewood and charcoal. This consumption rate worries sustainable initiatives, coupled with health challenges arising from indoor air pollution and continuous exposure to smoke.

Through this initiative, we aim to create awareness, clear misconceptions, and showcase the benefits of clean cooking through tailored messages and community engagement, contributing to the National Development Plan IV target of increasing clean energy use for cooking from the current 25% to 50% by 2030

YCED has decided to choose a different path with a different approach that prioritizes local energy communities to help them realize and harness that potential because it's quite clear that community acceptability of these green growth initiatives is very key.



Figure 6: Ms. Habibah Nakanwagi briefing women on alternative clean cooking initiatives during one of our community outreaches



Figure 7: Ms. Habibah Nakanwagi briefing women on alternative clean cooking initiatives during one of our community outreaches.



Figure 8: one of our projects where grassroot women are energy saving charcoal alternatives (briquettes)



Figure 9: One of the solar housings for briquette drying in Kikuube district under the clean energy hub.

THE AFRICAN CLIMATE LEGAL FELLOWSHIP PROGRAM (ACLFP).

This is a groundbreaking initiative aimed at equipping midcareer attorneys in Africa with the expertise and networks necessary to transition into careers in climate and environmental law, we are glad to receive a fellow under this initiative, YCED has facilitated her with impactful placements, for an organisation that is at the forefront of climate and environmental legal action, We hope this program builds her knowledge and capacity and offer tailored climate law education, leadership development, and a community of support designed to enable them to successfully transition and address critical African climate challenges.



Figure 10: Our Bridge placement interacting with environmental human rights defenders during one of our engagements in the Albertian region.

LOOKING AHEAD

The months ahead are about turning momentum into measurable impact. As we look to the future, Youth Concern on Environment and Development will focus on

i. Supporting the implementation of the African Climate Legal Fellowship Program (ACLFP).

ii. Continue influencing responsible Business Conduct in Uganda's oil and Gas sector through Monitoring, Documentation and Reporting (MDR).

iii. Enhancing youth leadership, Governance, and advocacy capacity.

Continue our efforts in defending environmental rights defenders through strategic litigation & representation.

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