

ORRA ANNUAL REPORT



Happy New Year to you all and special greetings from
Oil Refinery Residents Association

Dear Partners and Supporters;

For nearly 13 years now, the Oil Refinery Residents Association (ORRA), with support from partners and like minded stakeholders, have continued to support and work with communities affected by oil activities in the Albertine region to promote and protect human and environmental rights.

Last year, our efforts focused on amplifying the voices of marginalized groups primarily women and youth, advocating for policy reforms, and fostering community resilience amidst the ongoing challenges posed by climate change and oil extraction activities. Through targeted interventions, we engaged women, youth, local government including partner organizations demanding for human rights protection and climate justice.

Through these efforts, we have gathered significant evidence that clearly demonstrates our impact and unwavering commitment by communities to improving their livelihoods amidst the growing challenges of climate, land grabbing and environmental degradation. ORRA remains dedicated to ensuring that the rights and interests of affected communities are safeguarded, and that developments are achieved in a way that respects both people and the environment.



Christopher Opio, Team Leader ORRA



KEY IMPLEMENTED ACTIVITIES

Climate resilience and adaptation



Through our efforts, we are happy to report that we established **10 Climate Power Groups** with **over 300 women and youth**, directly equipping them with **climate resilience and adaptation skills**. Through these groups we have **indirectly impacted over 2,500 people** across **Hoima, Buliisa, and Kikuube districts**, enhancing community preparedness and ecosystem sustainability for long-term environmental health and climate resilience. The good news is that the groups are already doing tremendous work in their respective communities including organizing community-led actions rallying their communities to take appropriate climate action

Land Rights and Gender Equity



We strengthened economic independence for women by promoting alternative livelihood programs for displaced women, youth, and those in oil host communities such as beekeeping, tailoring, and clean energy through organic briquette production. Additionally, we increased awareness of land rights and conducted security trainings for Women Human Rights Defenders (WHRDs) to enhance their protection and advocacy capacity.

Environment and Extractives



With other community allies and partners, we mobilized and participated in four **(4) peaceful protests** with the **oil host community**. We held 8 exchange learning meetings among Project Affected Persons (PAPs) and 20 empowerment meetings reaching over **3,000 people**. We delivered **1 petition** to **5 major stakeholders in the oil industry**. We held **1 community Press Conference** reaching of over **100 people**. The actions were organized to send clear messages to the oil developers about the human rights and environmental concerns posed by the oil developments in the region.

Food and Agriculture



We believe in tangible results and community transformation, and as such we mobilized and supported planting of over **3,000 indigenous fruit trees** in **Kabaale and Buseruka**, supported **(10) climate power groups**, 2 of these have **over 50 beehives**, **1 group** is doing **fish farming** and **vegetable growing**. With the help of agriculture experts, we **conducted 5 trainings** on **produce handling, agroecology, tree planting and maintenance** fostering resilient sustainable farming.

OUR STRATEGIES

→ Dialogues

We facilitate dialogues between community members, local leaders, national authorities, and corporate stakeholders to promote inclusive decision-making and strengthen community participation. These meetings focus on empowering youth and women to assert their rights, engage in policy discussions, and contribute to sustainable development. In 2024, these dialogues enhanced collaboration, built trust, and fostered a shared commitment to addressing local challenges and advancing community-led solutions.

→ Exchange Learnings

We facilitate exchange learning initiatives to foster collaboration, knowledge sharing, and capacity building among grassroots groups. By creating spaces for Project Affected Persons (PAPs) allows groups to connect, share best practices, and support one another, we strengthen their ability to address local challenges and advocate effectively. In 2024, these exchanges enhanced community-led solutions, improved project implementation, and reinforced resilience in oil-affected areas.

→ Campaigns

We use targeted campaigns to mobilize communities, raise awareness, and drive action on critical issues like land rights, environmental protection, and climate justice. Through strategic messaging, community engagement, and advocacy efforts, our campaigns have strengthened public understanding, influenced policy discussions, and empowered grassroots groups to demand their rights. In 2024, these efforts led to increased civic participation and stronger community-led initiatives.

→ Public Interest Litigation and Legal Empowerment

We use legal empowerment and legal support to protect community rights and ensure access to justice. By providing legal assistance to grassroots activists facing arrests and (PAPs groups challenging unfair land compensation, we empower communities to defend their rights. In 2024, this strategy helped secure legal representation, challenge injustices, and strengthen legal awareness among affected groups.

→ Peaceful Actions

We use peaceful protests as a tool for advocacy, amplifying community voices against injustices related to oil extraction. By organizing well-coordinated demonstrations, we raise public awareness, attract media attention, and pressure decision-makers to engage with affected communities. In 2024, this strategy led to increased visibility of land and environmental concerns and facilitated direct dialogue with local officials.

Ongoing Campaigns

➤➤➤ Reactivating Indigenous knowledge and Amplifying Local Voices in Climate Action

Building on the momentum of our climate change campaign launched in August 2023, ORRA has continued to drive grassroots climate action through community-led initiatives. Between January and June 2024, we formed two Climate Power Groups in Kabaale Subcounty, Hoima District making (10) groups, a critical step toward our goal of establishing 15 Climate Power Groups by the end of 2025. Through these groups we empower youth and women as leaders in climate change adaptation and environmental conservation, equipping them with the knowledge and tools to drive sustainable climate solutions.



➤➤➤ The Climate Awareness Football Gala



On May 19 and 26, 2024, together with our partners under the umbrella of the Joke-Waller Hunter (JWH) initiative with support from BOTHENDs under GAGGA, we organized a climate change awareness football gala bringing together over 2,500 participants and spectators over two consecutive weekends. The event successfully combined the love for football with the urgent need for climate awareness and action, making it an inspiring model for community engagement.

Building on past successes, we took a more creative approach this year to expand our outreach, particularly among young people. The result was a remarkable increase in participation, demonstrating the power of sports as a platform for education and advocacy.



REPowerAfrika Campaign

On July 18, 2024, Oil Refinery Residents Association (ORRA) with support from 350.org Africa organized and participated in a launch of Solar Africa Project under the theme “Repower Africa.

The launch took place in Kyakatemba Village, brought together 70 people from the villages of Rwamusaga, Butimba and Kidoma in Kiziranfumbi sub county Kikuube district. The launch is part of a global movement campaign on a mission to empower local renewable energy initiatives across Africa.

The vision is to revolutionize energy production and redefine Africa's energy future. Nature Talk Africa team also joined us in the launch



The Outcomes

The launch of the renewable energy project sparked a significant shift in awareness among local communities regarding the need for sustainable energy alternatives.

It also highlighted the negative impacts of the EACOP project on the community. The launch garnered widespread support, and demand for expanding the renewable energy initiative to grow stronger.

Many of the community members in attending expressed the need for the project's reach to extend beyond the initial launch area and cover all the EACOP affected communities in Hoima, Kakumiro and Kikuube districts in the Albertine. With an aim to build momentum for what we envision as a renewable energy movement.

➤➤➤ Peaceful protests against Forced Evictions and Delayed Justice



ORRA supported and actively participated in a march that brought together 100 project affected people to protest the forced eviction of 42 Tilenga project-affected families, standing in solidarity with those unjustly displaced by TotalEnergies' oil developments. The hurried court proceedings that led to their eviction reflect a disturbing pattern of corporate and state interests overriding community rights, a struggle we deeply understand from our own longstanding fight for justice in the Oil Refinery case.

➤➤➤ The outcomes; Meeting with the EACOP team

Following the petition submitted on the 26th August, ORRA was invited by EACOP's Government Relations Officer to discuss the concerns raised. The meeting involved key stakeholders, including the RCC of Hoima City, regional intelligence officers for the Albertine region and oil operations, as well as Project-Affected Persons (PAPs) from Hoima, Kikuube, and Buliisa.

The key outcome of this meeting was the agreement to organize further discussions within the communities, where the voices of the PAPs will be central in identifying long-term solutions. The meeting highlighted the need for continuous and structured engagement between the government, community-based organizations (CBOs), and civil society organizations (CSOs) to ensure that the grievances of affected communities are addressed promptly and justly.



Our Demands remain clear; Hear our Voices!

THE ISSUES!

In our communities, oil development activities are ongoing and these have caused a lot of socio-economic, environmental/biodiversity and human rights injustices;

1. Human Rights Violations; (intimidation and harassments, arrests, inadequate compensations and GBV.)
2. Disruption of Local Economies, Inadequate Livelihood Restoration, Economic Inequality.
3. Environmental impacts; (Destruction of Biodiversity, Climate Change and Human-Wildlife Conflict.)
4. Desecration of Cites and Social Disruptions



THE DEMANDS!

In collaboration with our partners; Oil Refinery Residents Association (ORRA), EACOPH we mobilized our fellow community people affected by oil projects to demand the following;

1. Immediate Suspension of EACOP activities; conduct transparent consultations
2. Protection of Human Rights; Cease all forms of intimidation and harassment against project-affected persons (PAPs)
3. Environmental and Economic Justice
4. Accountability and Reparations
5. Sustainable Development Alternatives; Invest in clean energy alternatives.



➤➤➤ The Refinery Peoples Case

For over 11 years now, the oil refinery-affected communities have been entangled in a legal battle that has traversed two courts; Masindi High Court and Hoima Court and been presided over by more than eight different judges. This case is simply a clear example of “justice delayed, justice denied.” It has been repeatedly delayed due to numerous adjournments.

The continued delays reflect a deep failure of the judicial system to protect the rights of its people. Despite this, the affected individuals remain determined and steadfast in their demand for justice. They will not be silenced, nor will they accept anything less than the fair and just resolution they deserve.



➤➤➤ The Community Activists Case

On the 26th of August, the (7) PAPs were arrested and taken to Central Police Station - Kampala. They were charged for public nuisance. After which they were remanded to Luzira Prisons on 27th August, 2024.

On 6th September, they were released on court bail and to this date continue to report for their hearings as scheduled.



➤➤➤ Experience Sharing and Learnings

Throughout the year, ORRA facilitated and participated in experience-sharing engagements to build the capacity of (PAPs), grassroots defenders, and community advocates in the oil-affected regions. These sessions, including engagements with Tilenga, Kingfisher, and EACOP PAPs, created spaces for affected individuals to exchange strategies on addressing land rights violations, environmental injustices, and civic space restrictions caused by oil developments.

We worked in collaboration with AFIEGO EACOPHC, and NaTA. A key outcome was the empowerment of Kingfisher PAPs, who expressed readiness to organize and resist socio-economic and environmental injustices. Additionally, experience-sharing sessions with women and youth from Hoima, Kikuube, and Buliisa connected grassroots land and environmental defenders, allowing them to discuss human rights violations, safety concerns, and collective solutions to security threats.



➤➤➤ Consultative Meetings: Amplifying Community Voices for Solutions

Throughout the year, ORRA held a series of consultative meetings with Project-Affected Persons (PAPs), host communities with a focus on youth, and women to identify pressing challenges and collectively explore solutions. These engagements served as critical platforms for communities to voice concerns, particularly regarding land rights, fair compensation, livelihood restoration, and environmental sustainability amid oil and gas developments.

Women and youth, often the most affected yet least consulted, were at the center of these discussions. The insights collected shaped our key advocacy efforts, ensuring that their demands were reflected in policy dialogues and stakeholder engagements.

➤➤➤ Strategic dialogues and policy advocacy

ORRA has been at the forefront of meaningful dialogue and high-level engagements to ensure that the voices of Project-Affected Persons (PAPs), youth, and women are represented in key decision-making spaces. Through targeted advocacy and stakeholder dialogues, we have actively influenced local and national policies that impact oil-affected communities.

We have leveraged strategic platforms at National and local levels to amplify community concerns on land rights, environmental protection, and social justice. We supported several community-led engagements, including a community led press conference that brought together 100 community members, providing a critical space for affected persons to speak out against injustices.



➤➤➤ Youth mobilization for local climate action



Throughout the year, ORRA mobilized over 500 youth from Kabaale and Buseruka sub-counties to drive climate and environmental action in the face of ongoing oil developments. We held 10 youth-led meetings, we co-developed strategies for resilience, advocacy, and sustainable livelihoods.

A key insight from these engagements was the growing demand among youth for their rights to employment, fair working conditions, and community justice. They are eager to challenge injustices and push for investments in the green economy, including solar energy, sustainable agriculture, and eco-friendly enterprises.

Recognizing this momentum, we see a strategic opportunity to further amplify youth-driven solutions and support their efforts in securing climate-friendly livelihoods and social justice.



Strengthening Capacities of Human and Environmental Defenders

➤➤➤ On Business and Human Rights

On April 12th and 13th, we convened a pivotal training at Buseruka Subcounty headquarters, bringing together 30 Human Rights Defenders (HRDs) and Environmental Defenders from Kabaale and Buseruka sub-counties in the Albertine region. Under the theme, “Strengthening the Capacities and Knowledge of Human and Environmental Defenders in the Albertine Region,” the training focused on Business and Human Rights, equipping defenders with the skills to engage businesses effectively and advocate for community rights amid expanding oil and gas activities.

This initiative was a key step in movement building, reinforcing grassroots advocacy and strengthening collective action. By enhancing the capacities of HRDs and Environmental Defenders, we are ensuring a more coordinated and resilient response to human rights and environmental challenges in the region.



➤➤➤ Security Trainings for HRDs

As oil exploration and extraction intensify in the Albertine region, women human rights defenders (WHRDs) and grassroots activists are increasingly at risk while advocating for climate justice, environmental conservation, and community rights. In response, ORRA conducted security trainings to equip defenders with the necessary skills to navigate threats, enhance personal safety, and continue their advocacy work effectively.

Women in the region have taken leading roles in challenging the socio-environmental impacts of oil activities, including land dispossession, forced evictions, loss of livelihoods, and environmental degradation.

Additionally, under the JWH partnership, ORRA organized a specialized security training for activists and HRDs at risk. This session facilitated knowledge-sharing between seasoned activists and grassroots defenders, focusing on safety measures, digital security, and emergency response tactics.



Alternative Livelihoods Programs



➤➤➤ Beekeeping

We provided comprehensive training to 35 beekeepers. The training covered essential aspects of apiary management, modern beehive construction, advanced value addition techniques, and best practices for harvesting, processing, packaging, and branding. As a result of these efforts, a second group of beekeepers has also begun honey production, significantly increasing their beehive capacity. Together, the participating beekeepers now manage approximately 50 beehives.

➤➤➤ Fish farming

As part of our broader commitment to sustainable agriculture and economic empowerment, our fish farming initiative has continued to grow, delivering significant benefits to the community. The participating farmers have successfully maintained a fish pond with approximately 1,000 fish, each valued at UGX 4,000, providing both a source of nutrition and an avenue for income generation. We hope to expand the fish pond and increase their capacity to sustain a larger fish population.



➤➤➤ Vegetable Farming

We have facilitated hands-on training for farmers, focusing on climate-smart agricultural practices, soil health management, water-efficient irrigation techniques, and backyard gardening. These trainings were designed to support home consumption of fresh produce while also enabling farmers to sell surplus crops.

➤➤➤ Agroforestry

As part of our ongoing commitment to environmental conservation, we successfully organized the planting and distribution of over 2,000 indigenous tree seedlings in Kyakaboga Resettlement Village and Nyakasinina Village. This initiative brought together 150 community members. We prioritized training on proper planting techniques and long-term maintenance to ensure high survival rates and sustainable impact.



Need for Collective Action

➤➤➤ Challenges

Despite our progress in advocating for human rights, environmental justice, and community resilience, we continue to face significant challenges that hinder the full realization of our mission. These include;

1. The shrinking civic space within the Albertine region but also in the wider country.
2. Increased threats and intimidation against activists and HRDs
3. Prolonged legal battles
4. Inadequate funding remain critical obstacles to sustaining and expanding our impact.
5. Communities affected by oil and gas developments still struggle with land injustices, economic displacement, and environmental degradation, requiring continuous advocacy and intervention.



➤➤➤ Moving Forward

To overcome these challenges, collaboration is essential. We call upon partners, donors, and allies to join us in strengthening grassroots movements, amplifying community voices, and driving policy reforms that protect human and environmental rights. With increased support, we can;

1. Expand legal support and legal empowerment mechanisms for affected communities and activists.
2. Enhance climate adaptation and resilience campaigns to secure sustainable livelihoods.
3. Strengthen community-led advocacy through capacity-building and strategic engagements.
4. Broaden research and evidence-based advocacy to hold corporations and policymakers accountable.





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