



APRIL 2025

# QUARTER 1 NEWSLETTER

## OIL REFINERY RESIDENTS ASSOCIATION (ORRA)



**»»» Welcome Remarks**

Dear Partners and Allies;


We warmly welcome you to our Quarter One newsletter, where we highlight key activities, achievements, and challenges we encountered in the first quarter of 2025. As promised in our previous updates, our primary focus this year is on building grassroots climate action groups that are equipped with the knowledge, skills, and resources to lead the fight for climate justice. We aim to empower these communities to organize and advocate for inclusive, sustainable development that prioritizes both community needs and environmental protection.

Our efforts are driven by the reality that, as grassroots communities, we are highly vulnerable to the impacts of climate change. Unfortunately, we remain largely uninformed about the actions we can take locally to mitigate these effects. As we've shared with you before, the situation is even more dire for us as oil host communities in the Albertine region. The government and oil companies are actively campaigning to gain community support for the oil projects, focusing their messaging on promises of jobs and employment opportunities. However, any dissenting voices are being threatened and silenced.

Despite these increasing threats and intimidation, we are growing stronger. The good news is that our fellow community members are eager to learn and take action to protect our rights and the environment. However, as we did in our other engagements, there are still significant gaps in climate change awareness and education, leaving many unprepared to respond effectively or advocate for sustainable solutions. Recognizing these challenges, our grassroots initiatives are dedicated to bridging this gap by raising awareness, empowering individuals to make informed choices, and encouraging the adoption of climate-friendly practices. Above all, we are working to ensure that our communities hold leaders and institutions accountable for policies that promote real change and sustainable development.

We are happy to share with you some positive news: On Monday, April 7, 2025, the case against our comrades and colleagues was dismissed due to lack of prosecution. These seven grassroots defenders had been arrested and charged with public nuisance after we petitioned Total Energies and the Ugandan Parliament on August 26, 2024, regarding violations of rights and environmental protection amidst the ongoing oil and gas activities in our region.

Lastly, we are inspired to see that communities are not only aware of the challenges but are also stepping up to take meaningful climate action. We remain committed to supporting them in every way possible to ensure a brighter, more sustainable future for all. Thank you for your continued support and engagement.



*Christopher Opio, Team Leader ORRA*

## »»» A Gathering for Climate Awareness and Community Action

As grassroots organizers, one of our greatest challenges remains accessing the necessary funding to support and sustain various climate education initiatives within our communities. Limited resources often restrict the scope and reach of our activities. However, despite these constraints, we continue to find creative and effective ways to mobilize and engage our people. We are leveraging community social events, which naturally attract large, diverse gatherings.

On February 25, 2025, the Oil Refinery Residents Association, in partnership with Nature Talk Africa, we successfully hosted another Climate Change Awareness Gala in Nyakasinini. The event brought together over 1,000 people from different backgrounds and age groups, creating a vibrant space for dialogue, learning, and collective action towards protecting our environment and advocating for climate justice.



Our Climate Change Awareness Football Gala has shown that community-driven initiatives can effectively raise awareness and drive action on climate change. By leveraging cultural elements like football and storytelling, we can engage diverse communities and foster a collective movement for sustainability.



Climate policies sound great on paper, but we need to see real action at the community level. Authorities must support climate initiatives with funding and implementation strategies that make sense for the people they affect most. Change doesn't happen in isolation. Communities have ideas and solutions they just need support.

## »»» A Decade of Pain and Perseverance



*“I am 75 years old, if justice is delayed another 10 years, where will I be? We have the truth on our side. Let the courts deliver justice.”*

**Fenehance (Plaintiff/PAP)**



*“There is no amount of money that can compensate the social capital people loose when they are displaced, “at this point we are just seeking ruling that will set precedent for other communities facing similar challenges.”*

**Christopher Opio-Plaintiff**

Eleven years on, justice remains out of reach for oil refinery-affected families in Hoima. During a visit on March 18, 2025 by the Environmental Defenders Law Center (EDLC), affected community members at Kyakaboga Resettlement Village shared their stories of loss, frustration, and resilience in the face of a slow and burdensome judicial process.”



The session offered a much-needed safe space for the PAPs to reflect on the long and painful journey through Uganda’s slow and burdensome judicial system.

For delayed justice has become not only a legal issue but a source of ongoing trauma. each passing year without a ruling reopens old wounds: of broken homes, lost land, and the erosion of trust in the systems meant to protect them.

The visit by EDLC not only reaffirmed solidarity with the affected communities but also strengthened resolve for a just and timely resolution of the case.

## Case against grassroots community activists

We are happy to share with you a major victory for our colleagues, the 7 community activists and 13 Kampala based activists who were arrested and imprisoned for peacefully opposing the EACOP project last year in August. After months of adjournments and growing pressure, the state consistently failed to produce any credible evidence against the activists. The court finally dismissed the case on April 7th, 2025, citing lack of sufficient evidence. This dismissal is a strong reminder of the resilience of our communities and the power of standing together for justice.



## Building community power for human and environmental rights protection



On February 2, 2025 in partnership with Defenders Protection Initiative (DPI) as one of the members of Land and Environmental Defenders Task Force (LEDTAF), we organized a radio talk show to raise awareness about “The rise of child labor and trafficking.” issue emphasizing the critical role that communities play in protecting vulnerable groups alongside the environment



Similarly, on April 24, 2024 on Kazi-Njema radio, in partnership with DPI we placed a strong spotlight on the importance of grassroots action on environmental protection and sustainability. Through our series of radio engagements we aim at strengthening community knowledge and action to build resilience, ensure justice and support community -driven advocacy for environmental and human rights protection.

## Community led solutions amidst climate and development challenges

Through our livelihood program, on February 14, 2025 we organized an exchange learning Nyahaira and Nyakasenene, some of the groups we established last year in Kabaale-Hoima. These communities of farmers are transforming challenges into opportunities. They have adopted innovative practices, enabling them to continue harvesting from their vegetable gardens, fish ponds, and beehives even amidst intensifying climate shocks. This work is connected to our pursuit of climate justice ensuring that vulnerable communities have the tools and support to adapt, thrive, and assert their rights in the face of environmental and socio-economic pressures.



## Centering Community Voices in Climate Action



*“The voices of those most affected must be at the heart of climate solutions.”*



On February 11, 2025 we hosted a strategic consultation with community members from the oil host communities of Hoima and surrounding areas at Kyakaboga Hall.

Together, we engaged deeply on the urgent gaps in strategic climate action from building community resilience to strengthening grassroots structures.

## Climate Power Groups - Hope, Struggles, and New Beginnings

On March 22, 2025, the Oil Refinery Residents Association (ORRA) and Nature Talk Africa (NaTA) teams visited Nkwaki and Nzorobi village in Hoima district following an invitation from the local community. About 50 residents men and women gathered, united by their shared struggles and hopes for a better future amidst the unpredictable climate changes. The meeting led to formation of a new climate power group as it became clear that the people of Nkwaki and Nzorobi mainly farmers; beekeepers were deeply frustrated.

The Chairperson shared about the struggles of the farmers highlighting that they had attempted to form a self help group in 2020 with a total of five beehives. However due to lack of funds, they failed to keep up. Worse still, climate change was threatening their new found source of livelihood with prolonged droughts causing bees to abandon their hives.



Like so many other grassroots communities facing the harsh realities of climate change, Nkwaki and Nzorobi communities remain deeply vulnerable to droughts and failing livelihoods.

Amidst these challenges, we are empowering women to step up and lead efforts to build resilience and demand lasting solutions. Now more than ever, urgent action and solidarity are needed to support their fight for survival.

## Strengthening and Empowering EACOP project affected communities on climate justice

As part of our ongoing campaign, on Friday April 25, the Oil Refinery Residents Association (ORRA) in partnership with Fridays for Future Uganda (FFF Uganda), Nature Talk Africa (NaTA), organized a community engagement in the EACOP-affected areas of Hoima and Kikuube. The initiative is aimed at empowering the communities to take lead in advocating for their rights, climate and environmental justice, continue to amplify the local impacts of oil and gas development, and raise awareness on the links between fossil fuel expansion, environmental degradation, and human rights violations.

The engagement also focused on empowering communities to take proactive steps in demanding transparency, holding their leaders accountable, and advocating for investment in renewable energy solutions that prioritize people and the planet over profit.



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