JANUARY 2023

THE EAST AFRICAN SUSWATCH E-BULLETIN

A *Monthly* from the East African Sustainability Watch Network and INFORSE East Africa

INFORSE Uganda members Agree on Nature Palace Foundation as National Coordinator

On Thursday January 12, 2023 members of the International Network for Sustainable Energy (INFORSE) in Uganda held a meeting attended by 8 out of the 10 members. The meeting updated members on INFORSE Uganda activities and the plan for the year 2023 as part of the global INFORSE Network. As such the meeting sought members' input in the remaining period (January – March 2023) for the on-going plans and projects (The *East African Civil Society for Sustainable Energy and Climate Action (EASE CA)*; and the *INFORSE Synergies Across Continents* Project that seeks to bring together experiences from different regions and strengthen INFORSE members as a training platform for promotion of local sustainable energy solutions).

Mr. David Nkwanga (above) from Nature Palace Foundation on behalf of UCSD presented the draft: Scenario and Proposals for Transition to 100% Renewable Energy in Uganda, ending Unsustainable Wood Fuel and other Biomass Consumption, and replacing Fossil. Members made input to the draft proposals in the draft.

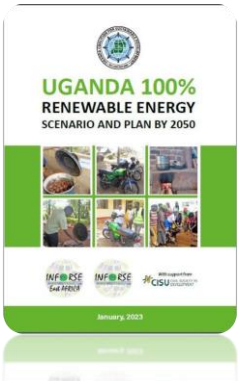
INFORSE Uganda members made input and observations to the draft Report especially on the recommendations. They underscored the Importance of a multistakeholder approach in getting the 100% Renewable Energy Plan implemented at all levels from the grassroots (Local Councils) to the highest political levels.

They also noted the need for support to CSOs and other development partners to get the local solutions in more areas (field demonstrations) across the country, especially interventions to counter the rampant biomass use. On tree planting, INFORSE Uganda members noted a need to put more emphasis on tree planting, as efficient cooking will still need a steady supply of fuel wood that is becoming scarce in many areas; as well as incorporating a sustainability plan in tree growing – based on management objective / purpose (indigenous trees, fruit trees for nutrition purposes, etc.)

Mr. Kimbowa (Uganda Coalition for Sustainable Development) briefed members about the need to have an INFORSE Uganda Coordinator (a voluntary, networking role), has hitherto been held by UCSD (which also doubles as INFORSE East Africa Chair among others). A consensus building process was agreed on that afterwards led to a decision to have Nature Palace Foundation as the INFORSE Uganda Coordinator.

INFORSE Uganda is part of the INFORSE network of 140 NGOs worldwide, formed 1992 at Earth Summit /UNCED, Rio. It is an international voice of NGOs promoting renewable & energy efficiency, Publishes The Sustainable Energy News, follows UN climate negotiations among others. INFORSE has active regional cooperation within Africa, Europe, South Asia. In order to bring together experiences from different regions and strengthen INFORSE members, a training platform: "Synergies Across Continents" was started. More about INFORSE Network, its activities and Projects: https://www.inforse.org/

100% Renewable Energy Scenario & Plan for Uganda is Ready



Earth Overshoot Day marks the date when humanity's demand for ecological resources and services in a given year exceeds what Earth can regenerate in that year. Earth Overshoot Day is hosted and calculated by Global Footprint Network, an international research organization that provides decision-makers with a menu of tools to help the human economy operate within Earth's ecological limits.

Since 1961, the first year consistent United Nations statistics were available, humanity's demand on resources has gone from being within the means of what nature could support to significantly over budget. Our planet went into global overshoot in the early 1970s. **Today, the estimated level of resources and ecosystem services required to support human activities is 1.7 Earths!**

Similarly, according to ourworldindata.org, energy production – mainly the burning of fossil fuels – accounts for around three-quarters of global greenhouse gas emissions. Not only is energy production the largest driver of climate change, the burning of fossil fuels and biomass also comes at a large cost to human health: at least five million deaths are attributed to air pollution each year. To reduce global emissions, we need to shift our energy systems away from fossil fuels to low-carbon sources of energy. We need to 'decarbonize'.

So, INFORSE's Vision 2050 programme shows how we can 'decarbonize' – changing the world's unsustainable energy system into a sustainable one. According to this Vision, 100% sustainable energy can be achieved by 2050. Therefore, in the coming years ahead of 2050, it will be crucial that the world's energy systems be made environmentally benign and sufficient to meet everybody's energy needs. We have better technologies than ever before to use energy efficiently, and to use the world's renewable energy resources without harming the environment.

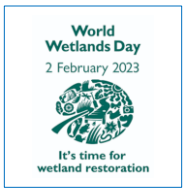
It is in this regard that Uganda Coalition for Sustainable Development and the International Network for Sustainable Energy (INFORSE) as part of the East African Civil Society for Sustainable Energy and Climate Action Project (2019-23) have prepared the *Uganda 100% Renewable Energy Scenario and Plan by 2050*

This Plan provides a general overview of the Ugandan situation regarding energy supply and demand, and presents a scenario for how Uganda can move into a 100% renewable energy economy in 2050 and also move from a lower income country into an upper middle income country while sustainably harnessing its biomass resources along with other renewable energy sources.

In the Plan, a basic analysis of the current total energy demand and supply patterns for Uganda is shown. Secondly a renewable energy scenario; universal access to modern energy services by 2030 (Sustainable Energy For ALL) is elaborated. Thirdly, a course of action is proposed which outlines how Uganda can contribute to the Paris Agreement's long-term temperature goal of reducing global greenhouse gas emissions by 2050 through its Nationally Determined Contributions (NDC). The Plan also puts forward policy proposals for Uganda to work towards 100% renewable energy by 2050, hinged on a supportive agency and structure

Read a Policy Brief: *Towards 100% Renewable Energy by 2050 for Uganda (February 2023)*: https://www.scribd.com/document/624146293/Policy-Brief-Towards-100-Renewable-Energy-by-2050-for-Uganda-February-2023

East Africa Should Halt Declining Wetland Acreage and Biodiversity Loss



Wetlands ecological services contribute $47.4 trillion annually to human health, happiness, and security according to UNEP. The World Wetlands Day 2023 was commemorated on February 2. The 2023 World Wetlands Day's theme "It's Time for Wetlands Restoration," highlights the urgent need to prioritize wetland restoration.

At the 14th Conference of Parties to the Ramsar Wetlands Convention, while the importance of people-centric wetland management approaches was agreed, the lack of financial incentives and sustainable business models was identified as a main constraint for community motivation in the wise-use of wetlands. The Secretary General's report showed low progress in projects that contribute to poverty alleviation, indicating that current wetland conservation programs do not adequately address livelihood development.

In many parts of East Africa, the tension between conservation and development remains, as communities, private entities and even Local Governments seek to expand land holdings for housing industry and commercial agriculture. According to the East African Wildlife Society, wetlands in East Africa continue to suffer a steady decline in their health and extent, as a result of encroachment, pollution and unsustainable utilization.

In Kenya, Yala Swamp is home to the nationally threatened Sitatunga antelope, other large mammals and wetland birds (including the vulnerable Papyrus Yellow Warbler). It is also a refuge for cichlid fish endemic to Lake Victoria that have become extinct in the main lake. In addition, the swamp provides numerous essential ecosystem services and vital resources to over 250,000 people who live around it.

However, according to Nature Kenya, over-exploitation of Yala swamp's natural resources, land-use changes, habitat degradation and biodiversity loss are some of these threats. Lake Agro Limited plans to set up a sugarcane plantation in the swamp, piling more pressure on the already fragile situation. "Sugarcane is the wrong crop for a wetland like Yala. This kind of farming threatens the swamp's biodiversity. Adverse effects of this project include massive loss of natural habitat, excessive water extraction, leaching of agrochemicals and fertilizer, air and water pollution," says Dr Paul Matiku, the Executive Director of Nature Kenya.

Furthermore, according to conservationstandards.org (October 2022), the majestic and endangered gray crowned crane is at risk of being lost across East Africa, which was once their historic stronghold. Grey crowned cranes are the fastest declining crane species in the world, having declined by 90% in the past 40 years. Protected areas cannot safeguard them as they depend on small pockets of wetlands scattered across East Africa. Poor farming communities depend on these same wetlands for their livelihoods.

This year's World Wetlands Day theme that calls out for wetlands restoration is in line with the Kunming-Montreal Biodiversity Agreement adopted by 196 countries under the UN Convention on Biological Diversity in 2022, committing the world to halting and reversing biodiversity loss by 2030. Specifically, there was an agreement on inclusion of inland waters and coastal ecosystems in the targets on restoration and conservation of 30% of the planet by 2030.

Hence, East Africa needs to be proactive and guard against any further loss of wetland acreage, and to find ways and means of getting communities and people dependent on / living in close proximity to these vital inland waters and coastal ecosystems. It is especially urgent that alternative options for those dependent on wetlands in many fast growing urban areas across the region are sought.