



EAST AFRICAN
CRUDE OIL PIPELINE
HOST COMMUNITIES



**SPECIAL
INTERNATIONAL
WOMEN'S DAY
EDITION**



March
Happy Women's Day



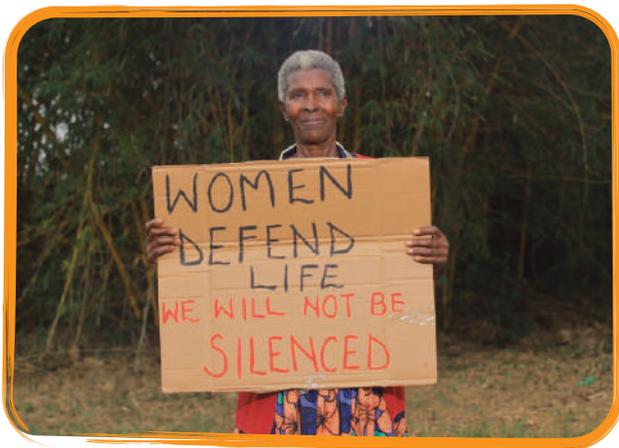


Every year on March 8, the world pauses to celebrate women. But in the Albertine Rift, one of Africa's most biodiverse and most fossil-fuel-threatened corridors, a pause is a luxury the land and its women cannot afford. Here, celebration must double as action. This special edition of our inaugural newsletter is dedicated to the women who do not wait for permission to lead, to protect, and to rebuild. We present to you the attributes and contributions the women in the EACOP host communities have done in our fight and struggle for climate justice and demand of accountability from oil companies, a threat to their livelihoods. This edition is a tribute to our women who cement the foundation of our movement and how they have been resilient in this journey.

THE ROOTS THAT RUN DEEP: Women as Architects of Community Resilience

Long before the language of 'climate activism' entered the international lexicon, women in the Albertine Rift were already doing the work. They were tending gardens along the shores of Lake Albert, managing water allocation in the Bunyoro foothills, negotiating land use between farming and pastoral communities, and transmitting ecological knowledge to the next generation around evening fires. They were, in the truest sense, the connective tissue of community life.

This is not romanticisation. It is a well-documented pattern across the Great Lakes Region: women's domestic and agricultural roles place them in daily, intimate contact with natural systems. They notice when the rains shift, when the fish are fewer, when the soil darkens unnaturally, when children cough from fumes they cannot name. They are the first early-warning system that no satellite can replicate.



"When the oil company came, it was the women who first said something was wrong. Not because they read a report but because they lived the land."

— Community organiser, Hoima District, Uganda

As fossil fuel extraction has intensified across the Albertine Rift, with oil blocks extending into Uganda, the Democratic Republic of Congo, and Tanzania, this intimate ecological knowledge has become a form of resistance. Women's place-based understanding of the land is not a soft supplement to technical expertise. It is a distinct and vital intelligence that formal climate science is only beginning to value.

What Women Lose When the Rigs Arrive

The Albertine Rift sits atop significant oil and gas reserves. Since the discovery of commercially viable oil in the early 2018, communities along the rift have experienced a seismic shift, not just geological, but social. Land acquisition for pipelines and drilling operations has displaced tens of thousands of families. Agricultural land has been lost. Fishing grounds have been contaminated. And the burden of these losses has fallen disproportionately on women. Women in the region derive food security, income, and social standing largely from land-based livelihoods: smallholder farming, fishing, artisanal salt harvesting, and forest-based enterprises. When land is acquired, often without adequate consultation or compensation, these livelihoods do not disappear quietly. They collapse in real time, and women are left navigating the wreckage.



The Gendered Cost of Extraction



Displacement from agricultural land reduces women's food production capacity and erodes household nutrition.



Contaminated water sources increase the time and distance women must travel for clean water hours reclaimed from education, income, and rest.



When men migrate to oil-adjacent employment, women absorb additional domestic and caregiving responsibilities.



Loss of common land weakens women's collective economic arrangements, dissolving savings groups and barter networks built over generations.



The continued domestic violence, family abandonment by the men and sexual violation incidents are one of those costs that cannot be over looked.



The high rates of school dropouts and teenage pregnancies have become a sort-what kind of plague that erodes the social capacity and capability of the communities.

These costs are not incidental to fossil fuel development. They are its structural consequence. Any serious conversation about transitioning away from fossil fuels in the Albertine region must begin with an honest accounting of what extraction has already taken and who it has taken it from.

COMMUNITY BUILDING AS CLIMATE ACTION: **The Logic Women Already Know.**

There is a powerful argument made with increasing urgency by climate researchers that community cohesion is one of the most robust predictors of climate resilience. Communities that communicate effectively, share resources equitably, maintain social trust, and act collectively recover faster from climate shocks and are better positioned to resist extractive pressures. In short: strong communities are climate-adaptive communities.



Women in the Albertine Rift have been building exactly these kinds of communities, often in the absence of institutional support, formal recognition, or financial resources. Through rotating credit and savings associations, through cooperative farming arrangements, through women's land rights coalitions, and through inter-community peacebuilding between fishing and farming households, women have been constructing the social infrastructure on which climate resilience depends.



"We do not call it 'community building.' We call it living. But when you live together well, when no one is hungry and everyone is heard, that is power the oil company cannot drill out of you."

— **Women community chapter leader, Kijumba village, Hoima**

This community-building work is, in effect, a form of non-violent resistance to fossil fuel dependency. When women strengthen local food systems, they reduce communities' material need to accept extraction on unfavourable terms. When women lead savings groups, they build economic buffers that allow households to refuse poorly compensated land deals. When women organise across village boundaries, they create the collective voice necessary to influence policy, engage legal systems, and attract the attention of international climate advocates.

The fight against fossil fuels, in other words, is not only fought at the pipeline or at the negotiating table. It is fought every time a community becomes stronger, more self-sufficient, and more capable of saying: we do not need your oil on your terms.

AMPLIFYING LEADERSHIP: **What the Region Must Do Now**

Recognising women's contributions is not enough. Recognition without structural change is tribute without transformation. The Albertine region (its governments, civil society organisations, development partners, and communities) must move from celebrating women's climate leadership to enabling and protecting it.

Five Urgent Commitments

Secure Women's Land Rights.

Without tenure security, women's stewardship of natural resources remains precarious. Governments across the region must accelerate land titling programmes that include women – not as secondary beneficiaries of their husbands' titles, but as independent landholders.

Fund Women-Led Community Organisations.

The savings groups, cooperatives, and advocacy coalitions that women have built are chronically underfunded. Climate finance flowing into the Albertine region must include dedicated, flexible, direct funding to women-led organisations – not filtered through layers of intermediaries.

Include Women in Fossil Fuel Transition Planning.

The Just Transition frameworks being developed for the region's oil-affected communities often speak of 'community consultation' but deliver male-dominated forums. Meaningful inclusion requires deliberate design: women-only consultation spaces, translation support, and childcare provision at every table.

Protect Environmental Defenders.

Women who speak out against extractive industry – who document spills, organise protests, file legal complaints – face threats, intimidation, and in some cases violence. Regional governments must enact and enforce robust legal protections for environmental human rights defenders, with specific provisions for women.

Invest in Women's Energy Access.

A genuine transition away from fossil fuels must offer communities something better, not just the removal of something harmful. Expanding access to solar energy, clean cookstoves, and community microgrids – led by and for women – builds the energy independence that makes fossil fuel alternatives real.

A TRIBUTE FROM THE EACOP HOST COMMUNITIES' WOMEN: **In Our Own Words and Actions.**

This International Women's Day, we pay tribute not to an abstraction but to specific acts of courage and care that have changed the Albertine Rift in ways no official report has yet measured. To the woman in Buliisa who spent three years documenting environmental and biodiversity contamination with a notebook and a mobile phone. To the farmer in Kijumba who refused resettlement money not because she could afford to refuse it, but because she understood that accepting it would betray her grandmother's land and her daughter's future. To the savings group in Kikuube that has capitalised women's agricultural enterprises and kept families off food insecurity. To the female youth climate educator in Kyakabooga who teaches the youth that the choice between jobs and environment is a false one, that the real choice is between short-term development and long-term suffering.



In the middle of this pressure stood the women of the region. Not as victims. Not as passive beneficiaries of outside intervention. But as leaders, innovators, protectors, and builders of the community, of resilience, and of the kind of solidarity that is, ultimately, the most durable foundation for any transition to a liveable world. This International Women's Day, let us not merely celebrate them. Let us follow them. Let us fund them. Let us get out of their way. extraction and long-term life. To every woman who has attended a community meeting and chapter engagement, raised her hand, been ignored, and raised it again.





HAPPY
Women's Day



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