



EAST AFRICAN  
**CRUDE OIL PIPELINE**  
**HOST COMMUNITIES**



# **FROM THE YOUTH AT THE FRONTLINES: A MESSAGE OF RESILIENCE AND URGENCY**

Newsletter April 2026



## From the youth at the frontlines: A message of resilience and urgency

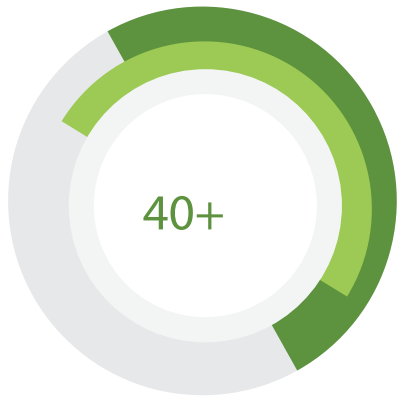
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Welcome to our inaugural newsletter. This April, we write not only to celebrate progress, but also to raise an urgent alarm. In this edition, we highlight the remarkable growth in youth empowerment, grassroots organizing, leadership, and climate justice activism across oil-affected communities. We showcase how young people in these communities have built the knowledge, skills, and confidence needed to respond to a rapidly shrinking civic space while taking bold leadership in shaping their own future.

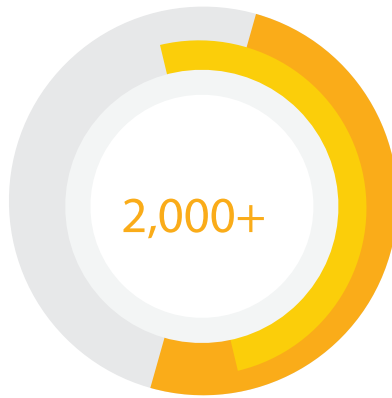
Across EACOP-affected communities in Uganda, a generation of young people has spent years refusing to remain invisible. They have organized at the grassroots level, educated themselves and their peers, amplified their lived experiences, and articulated their own civic and political demands. Through collective action, they have built strong community structures and people-powered movements rooted in solidarity, resilience, and justice. Today, they are no longer passive subjects of oil companies, government institutions, or NGOs, but organized constituencies with the capacity, voice, and leadership to actively influence and participate in decisions that affect their lives and future.

Yet even as we document this inspiring story of youth resistance, resilience, and community power, a dark shadow continues to emerge. The civic space that has enabled this organizing, the freedom to assemble, mobilize, petition, and speak truth to power, is increasingly under threat. The proposed Protection of Sovereignty Bill represents one of the most serious attacks yet on civic freedoms and Uganda's growing climate justice movement. In this edition, we explore both realities: the inspiring rise of grassroots youth leadership and the escalating threats facing civic action and environmental justice in Uganda.

# MOVEMENT IN NUMBERS



Youth Chapters Established



Young Members Organized



Districts Across Uganda

From Project-Affected Persons to Civic and Political Education Leaders:  
The Rise of a Youth-Led Movement.

When the East African Crude Oil Pipeline (EACOP) was first announced, our communities along its route were spoken about, but rarely consulted, and never meaningfully represented in the decisions shaping our future. As young people directly affected by oil and gas developments in Uganda, we were promised jobs, development, and prosperity. Yet, at the same time, we watched our land being surveyed and taken, our water sources disrupted, and our future tied to a fossil fuel agenda that we had no role in designing.

For years, we, as project-affected communities, have endured serious human rights and socio-economic injustices, including land dispossession, delayed and inadequate compensation, and restricted access to essential resources such as water and farmland. These impacts have undermined our dignity, disrupted livelihoods, increased poverty, and deepened social and economic inequalities within our communities.

At the same time, these oil projects have accelerated environmental destruction, threatening fragile ecosystems, public health, and the natural resources our communities depend on for survival. They have also contributed to the shrinking of civic space through intimidation, harassment, arbitrary arrests, and the silencing of community members, activists, and environmental and human rights defenders who continue to demand accountability, justice, and community rights.



That silence, however, did not last. Over the past several years, a strong grassroots movement has emerged through strategic, community-led organizing. Across more than 15 districts along the EACOP corridor, over 40 Youth Chapters have been formed, bringing together more than 2,000 young people into a powerful civic movement.

These chapters are not simply awareness groups, but democratic and self-organized structures with elected leadership, collective decision-making, and the capacity to mobilize in response to environmental, legal, and political challenges affecting their communities.

Through this organizing, EACOP-affected communities have concluded that the project is incompatible with climate justice, human rights, and sustainable development. Instead of prosperity, many communities continue to face land dispossession, environmental destruction, livelihood loss, intimidation, and growing social insecurity. As a result, communities maintain that the EACOP project must be stopped.

These shared experiences have also strengthened solidarity among farmers, fishers, youth, women, workers, cultural leaders, and grassroots organizers across the corridor. Through the People's Agenda process, communities have organized assemblies, dialogues, media engagement, and grassroots outreach to document violations, amplify community voices, and advance a collective demand for accountability, justice, and meaningful participation.

# The Chapter Model: Democracy at the Community Level

The chapter model is deceptively simple in structure, but profound in practice. Each chapter in communities such as Kasinyi-Buliisa, Nyakasenene-Hoima, Kisambo-Kikuube, Kyakabooga-Hoima, and Kijumba-Hoima elects its own leadership and convenes its own meetings. Members deliberate on local concerns from land compensation delays and blocked access roads to flooding caused by pipeline construction and water spring contamination etc and collectively decide on responses.



What makes this model distinct is accountability: chapter leaders are accountable to their communities, not to NGO timelines or donor frameworks. The organizing is community-owned. Youth are being developed not just as activists, but as civic actors with long-term leadership capacity, they are community-based conveners, educators, strategists, and advocates.

## Capacity and leadership: Training a Green better generation

At the heart of this movement is a deliberate investment in people. Strengthening youth capacity has not been about importing external experts to lecture communities, it has been about developing locally grounded organizers who are drawn from and accountable to affected communities.

These youth organizers serve multiple roles: they convene chapter meetings, reinforce transparent and democratic leadership practices, translate complex policies and legal processes into accessible information for marginalized farmers, women, and elders, and provide direct accompaniment to chapter members facing harassment, arrests, or threats.



## Climate justice & Just energy transition: Green Skills as Resistance

Empowerment has also taken a practical form. Throughout 2025, Youth Chapters engaged in hands-on training in renewable energy technologies particularly solar solutions and climate-smart agriculture, including sustainable vegetable farming and resource-efficient techniques. Rather than merely resisting what they oppose, youth are now actively demonstrating what they want:

1. Clean energy alternatives to fossil fuel dependence
2. Green livelihoods that restore environmental dignity
3. Community-led innovation hubs providing ongoing access to renewable skills
4. Women-led green enterprises in biomass briquette production and clean cooking



Importantly, trained youth have become knowledge multipliers cascading their skills to peers and to women within their communities, expanding the reach of the green transition far beyond any single training event by advocating and capacitating themselves in enhancing their skills in livelihood restoration and resilience in their recently proposed CLARRA chapter initiative, (Climate Livelihood Agripreneurship for Restoration, Resilience and Adaptation ) which will enable them to diversify and mobilize beyond their borders. This ensures that they are no longer temporary participants but are established as community sustained, resourcefully mobilized, self -directed leaders of a broader movement for climate justice, energy democracy and genuinely people-centered development across the region.

**“Trained youth are now teaching their neighbours. The knowledge belongs to the community and it cannot be taken away.”**

### **The Advocacy Toolkit: Building Evidence-Based Power**

Knowledge without tools remains inert. That is why a key pillar of youth capacity-building has been equipping chapters with practical organizing and advocacy tools grounded in evidence from their own lived realities.

Community chapters were trained and supported to conduct systematic consultations with project-affected persons going door-to-door in deep villages, gathering testimonies, and documenting violations which resulted into the birth of the People’s agenda. These testimonies form the evidentiary foundation of advocacy engagements, not opinions or abstractions, but documented facts about broken promises, delayed compensation, environmental harm, and denied rights.

Perhaps nothing illustrates the political maturation of EACOP-impacted youth more vividly than the emergence of the People's Agenda a collectively authored, community-owned political platform that rewrites the relationship between affected communities and political power.



Quarterly community engagement processes led by chapter leaders ensure that concerns are regularly gathered, updated, and disseminated to responsible parties. This creates a living, community-owned database of accountability.

The People's Agenda has now been compiled into a community-authored booklet produced not by national NGOs or external advocates, but by youth chapter members documenting their own realities, demands, and vision for a just future. This booklet is both a political advocacy instrument and a practical organizing resource.

It has been deployed in community dialogues, media engagements, and direct interactions with state actors. The People's agenda has also become a connective tissue across chapters a shared platform that bridges geographic distances, unites different community experiences under common demands, and provides a legitimate, collectively-owned mandate for engagement at national and regional levels.

### Shrinking Civic Space: The Walls Closing In

Even as the youth movement grows in confidence and organizational strength, the environment in which it operates is becoming more hostile. The pattern of shrinking civic space in Uganda is not new but it is intensifying, and EACOP-impacted communities are among those feeling it most acutely



The challenges facing environmental defenders and civic activists along the EACOP corridor have been documented consistently over the years: arbitrary arrests, prolonged detentions, restrictions on peaceful assembly, surveillance of chapter leaders, and the silencing of critical voices in the media as oil-aligned interests influence editorial spaces.

With Uganda's 2026 general elections, civic pressures compounded: media bandwidth shifted overwhelmingly toward political horse-race coverage, squeezing out environmental and community justice stories. The oil industry's ongoing influence in media spaces has further constrained balanced and critical reporting on EACOP developments.

The geographic dispersal of affected communities across more than 15 districts logistically complex to coordinate under normal circumstances becomes even more challenging when movement is restricted, communications are monitored, and organizers face the risk of arrest for carrying out basic civic functions such as petition delivery.

### **The Protection of Sovereignty Bill: A Threat by Another Name**

And now, the most serious legislative threat yet: Uganda's proposed Protection of Sovereignty Bill. While framed in the language of national self-determination and protection from foreign interference, the Bill carries provisions that if enacted would fundamentally alter the legal landscape for civil society, environmental advocacy, and community organizing in Uganda.

#### **What the Bill Proposes**

The Protection of Sovereignty Bill, as currently drafted and debated in Uganda's Parliament, targets organizations that receive foreign funding and engage in activities deemed to be against Uganda's "national interest" a phrase whose vagueness is not accidental. Under the Bill's provisions:

- Civil society organizations receiving foreign funding could be required to register under a restrictive new framework overseen by government authorities with broad discretionary powers.
- Activities classified as interfering with "sovereign decisions" including advocacy against government-supported infrastructure projects like EACOP could be curtailed or criminalized.

- Organizations and individuals could face deregistration, fines, or criminal liability for engaging in campaigns that are deemed to undermine national interests including climate justice campaigns.
- Foreign-funded advocacy on environmental, land rights, or energy policy matters could be reclassified as politically subversive activity.



### Why This Matters for EACOP Youth Chapters

*The youth chapters that have spent years building community-led organizing infrastructure depend on international solidarity and support to function. The People's Agenda itself a community-owned document of demands, could be characterized under this Bill as foreign-influenced interference in Uganda's sovereign energy decisions. The Bill does not just threaten organizations. It threatens the very concept of communities asserting their constitutional rights.*

### Sovereignty Weaponized Against the People

The profound irony of the Protection of Sovereignty Bill is that it deploys the language of self-determination against the very communities whose sovereignty has been most systematically violated. It is the farmers of Buliisa whose land was compulsorily acquired without adequate compensation who understand sovereignty as the right to decide what happens on their land. It is the fishing communities of Hoima whose lakes access have been disrupted who understand environmental rights as inseparable from sovereignty.

When sovereignty is invoked to protect extractive industries and ideas and silence those who oppose it, we must ask: whose sovereignty is being protected?

**“Sovereignty is not a corporate asset. It belongs to the people and the people have spoken in the People's Agenda.”**

### **The Road Ahead: Organizing Under Pressure**

None of this will hinder the communities' resilience. The history of the EACOP youth chapters is precisely a history of organizing under pressure of responding to arrests with mobilization, to silence with documentation, to exclusion with the construction of alternative political platforms.

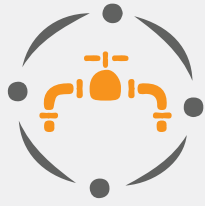
The next phase of work will deepen that resilience to assess challenges and define the path forward. Civic and human rights education sessions workshops and study circles will ensure that members understand their constitutional protections and international human rights standards. National and cross-border campaign moments will link Ugandan youth to the wider regional movement in Tanzania and across East Africa.

### **A FINAL WORD**

The story of EACOP-impacted youth in Uganda is not a story of victimhood even though the violations are real and documented. It is, above all, a story of transformation: of people who were once spoken about learning to speak for themselves, and then learning to demand to be heard.

Forty chapters. Over 2,000 members. A People's Agenda. An advocacy toolkit gained in community consultations. This is what it looks like when frontline communities stop waiting to be saved and start building the power they need to save themselves.

The Protection of Sovereignty Bill represents a critical test: will Uganda's civic space contract further, or will the documented demands of project-affected communities grounded in the Constitution itself be respected? The answer will depend, in part, on how loudly the rest of the world bear's witness. The youth of the EACOP corridor are watching. They are organized. And they are not going anywhere.



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