



Citizens Concern Africa (CICOA) and Vijana for Sustainable Development and Environmental Action (VIDEA) Condemn Selective Enforcement of Evictions by NEMA in Lubigi Swamp

Kampala, Uganda – June 15, 2024 – Citizens Concern Africa (CICOA) and Vijana for Sustainable Development and Environmental Action (VIDEA) strongly condemn the recent actions by the National Environment Management Authority (NEMA) involving the eviction of vulnerable communities from the Lubigi swamp. While environmental conservation is a shared priority, the selective enforcement of the law targeting only the marginalized is unacceptable and unjust.

On Wednesday 11th June, 2024, NEMA's Environmental Protection Force, accompanied by local enforcement agencies, conducted a large-scale eviction operation in the Lubigi swamp. This operation led to the displacement of hundreds of families, many of whom have lived in the area for years. Despite assurances of support, these families are now left homeless and without basic necessities, further exacerbating their vulnerability.

While NEMA's mandate to protect wetlands and ensure environmental sustainability is recognized, CICOA and VIDEA are alarmed by the apparent selective application of the law. Our investigations reveal that while the homes of impoverished settlers were demolished, large businesses and residences of influential individuals located in wetlands across Kampala city and the rest of the country remain untouched with the regulator citing valid clearance certificates for some exemptions. This selective enforcement not only undermines the rule of law but also raises questions about the integrity and fairness of NEMA's operations.

"Environmental protection should not be a weapon wielded against the poor while the affluent and powerful continue to degrade our natural resources without consequence. We call on NEMA to apply the law equitably and ensure that all individuals and entities, regardless of their socioeconomic status, are held accountable for encroachments," said Andrew Mafundo, the Executive Director at CICOA.

"This eviction exercise has left many without shelter, exposing them to further hardships. It is unacceptable that vulnerable communities bear the brunt of environmental enforcement while powerful entities are allowed to flout the law. NEMA must act with integrity and transparency in all its operations," said Rosette Nandutu, the Executive Director at VIDEA.

In this regard, we demand the following actions from NEMA and the Government of Uganda;

1. **A Halt to Selective Evictions:** we urge NEMA to halt all evictions in the Lubigi wetland immediately and advocate for inclusive discussions involving NEMA and local leaders. We call for meaningful dialogue with affected communities to find sustainable and inclusive solutions that respect both environmental priorities and human needs.
2. **Equitable Enforcement:** NEMA must ensure that all encroachments, regardless of the perpetrator's status, are addressed with the same rigour and fairness. Only through such equitable enforcement can trust in NEMA's commitment to environmental protection and justice be restored.
3. **Stakeholder Engagement:** Affected communities, civil society organizations, and other stakeholders must be included in decision-making processes regarding environmental conservation efforts

CICOA and VIDEA stand in solidarity with the displaced families and call upon all relevant authorities to take immediate corrective measures to address this injustice. We remain committed to advocating for environmental justice and the rights of vulnerable populations.

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About CICOA

Citizens' Concern Africa (CICOA) is a Ugandan non-governmental organisation founded in 2012 with a mission to safeguard the Planet, empower communities, and uphold human Rights.

At CICOA, we believe solutions to environmental degradation and social injustices come from the most impacted people therefore, we work directly with communities, and empower them to be at the forefront of protecting their human rights and the earth.

Our dream is to live in a world where human rights are respected, upheld, and protected.

About VIDEA

VIDEA, also known as Vijana for Sustainable Development and Environmental Action, is a non-profit organization based in Uganda established in February 2020 and officially accredited by the Uganda NGO Board in October 2021. VIDEA is dedicated to empowering young people and women across the country to advocate for human rights, equality, environmental protection, and social justice.

At VIDEA, we believe that young people and women are vital agents of change in creating a safer, fairer, and more sustainable society, therefore, our grassroots approach through community engagement, education, and empowerment programs ensures that our efforts are

rooted in the needs and realities of the communities we serve to build a healthier, more equitable, and sustainable world for all.