



**Universität
Zürich^{UZH}**

**Right
Livelihood**
CENTRE ZÜRICH

Sustainability Now!
Analysing Empowerment for Change
«Protecting Landscapes from the Commercial
Development of Oil Production»

Veranstaltungsbericht

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On April 27, the event “Sustainability Now! Protecting Uganda’s Landscapes from the Commercial Development of Oil Production” took place. The event was hosted by the Right Livelihood Center of UZH and the UZH Sustainability Team and moderated by the students Vera Bergmann, Linus Raucheisen and Laura Rindlisbacher. The keynote speaker of the event was Diana Nabiruma, Senior Communications Officer of AFIEGO (Africa Institute for Energy Governance), who advocates against extractive oil and gas projects in Africa, such as the planned 1444 kilometre long pipeline through Uganda and Tanzania. After her precise and intensive speech, Diana Nabiruma was joined by Fritz Brugger from NADEL at ETH Zurich and Andreas Missbach from Alliance Sud.

The first part of the panel discussion focused on economic and environmental development and how it can be balanced. The essential takeaway was however, that the damage of the environment is inherent in extractive projects of oil and gas companies, as a result, the detrimental effects for the landscape, wildlife and people can only be mitigated, but never in a balance with economic benefits.

The second topic was the conflict between the global North and South which is embedded in the climate crisis and the exploitation of oil in Uganda. The guiding question here was whether Europeans can ask Uganda not to engage in oil and gas production when they once did the same. East African countries such as Uganda are the "lungs of the world". Therefore, everyone is affected by environmentally damaging projects and its inherent enhancement of the climate crisis. As a result, people from the global South and the North have the right to oppose extractive projects in the global South and to advocate sustainable Ugandan projects. As a second argument, Diana Nabiruma used the metaphor of pouring petrol around a house and then lighting it on fire, just because your neighbour has also done so. Hence, applying the same logic, only because the global North has been exploiting the environment, the same detrimental mistake must not be repeated by the global South. Therefore, also people of the global North can oppose oil companies in the global South. Another aspect of the South-North conflict mentioned is the global North benefiting more from these extractive projects in Uganda than the Ugandan population and the country itself. For the majority of the oil production rights are owned by the French company TotalEnergies. For this reason, and because Uganda does not have the necessary infrastructure for refining, most of the oil produced in Uganda would be used by Europeans. Thus, the profit from oil extraction would flow to Europe and could not be

reinvested in the Ugandan infrastructure. As a result, Uganda's economic development would only benefit marginally from oil extraction.

The third focus of the discussion laid on different ways in which people and organizations in Uganda, but also in other countries, can be empowered and become important changemakers. Here the speakers discussed various ways to oppose the oil companies and their extraction projects. These included legal tools such as taking legal steps against the oil companies by their national laws, regulatory measures and investing in green and renewable energy. The speakers stressed that finding green alternatives is essential to reduce the demand for oil and gas and thus the need for extraction. Switzerland also has many options to prevent extraction projects, seeing there are Swiss banks involved in oil extraction companies and TotalEnergies' liquefied petroleum gas trading operations are based in Geneva. The corporate responsibility initiative (Konzernverantwortungsinitiative) was also mentioned as a way to hold companies accountable for their actions.

The speakers agreed that there are multiple ways to protect Uganda's landscapes and people from commercial oil exploitation, including strengthening civil society, taking legal action, working together with different organizations, and using financial instruments. However, there are three further essential sentiments: First, awareness of what is going on in the world of extractive and environmental politics is essential. Secondly, since the environment affects us around the globe, there is a need of solidarity between different civil societies and their organisations. Finally, as Diana Nabiruma pointed out, we must always keep our hope. The work of AFIEGO, NADEL at ETH Zurich, Alliance Sud, the Sustainability Team of the UZH, Right Livelihood and of course the engagement of the students shows that sustainable development is on track and that there is one feeling we share: Hope for beautiful, stunning, and sustainable world.