

UPDF launches crackdown on illegal fishing in western Uganda

RUKUNGIRI

By John B. Thawite

The Fisheries Protection Unit (FPU) has issued a three-month ultimatum to the fishing communities at Lake Edward Rwenshama landing site in Rukungiri to stop using illegal gear.

The national FPU commander, Lt Col James Nuwagaba, made the call while launching the unit's operations against illegal fishing in western Uganda, at the landing site in Queen Elizabeth National Park.

The FPU is a section of the Uganda People's Defence Forces (UPDF).

Illegal fishing

The unit, which has been battling illegal fishing, was established by President Museveni and operates under the agriculture ministry.

Nuwagaba said for decades, the fishermen had failed to improve because of the poor fishing practices.

Instead, they have choked the lake with excess boats. The landing site was meant



Some of the illegal boats and fishing nets burnt at Rwenshama landing site Monday as part of the crackdown against illegal fishing. Photos by John Thawite

to hold 60 boats but now has about 150," he told journalists.

Nuwagaba handed the boat makers a drawing of the design of the recommended boat size to the communities which should be 28.6ft. He said anyone found using a boat of lower specification would be prosecuted.

Illegal gear burnt

During the operation, illegal fishing gear was burnt, symbolising the beginning of the crackdown.

Briefing journalists at the landing site, Nuwagaba said the fishing gear that was destroyed included nine boats, 2,350 under-size fishing nets

and 2,000 hooks.

He said 350 of the under-size nets belonged to Congolese Mai Mai rebels.

"People here live in a national park with no gardens, so they survive on fish. We have given them three months to get better boats and nets," he said.

"Because of this, we have not



Nuwagaba

The destroyed fishing gear included nine boats, 2,350 under-size fishing nets and 2,000 hooks

burnt all their boats though they are illegal," Nuwagaba said.

WHAT RESIDENTS

Oliver Nakiranda
Where will I get the
to look after my

children and mother
who solely depend
on me. Now that the
operation has started
will adjust and com

Saidi Nahati, 42,
coxswain
Though it will hurt
us for some time, I
believe it will help
us to modernise our
trade.

Jerina Bingwa, 53,
I am worried about
how I am going to
service a sh5m loan
I had obtained to
support my fish trade
I had so far repaid
sh3m.

Swaib Baryaruka,
chairman landing
site Though some
people will lose jobs
the outcome will be
beneficial.

Challenges

Nuwagaba, however,
the operation faced
challenges such as
Mai Mai rebels who
fish on the Uganda
the lake.

"They cross over to
boats and engines. Some
they connive with
and in other cases
guns," he said.