

Katakwi officials fuel charcoal burning

KATAKWI

By Emmanuel Alomu

Some government officials in Katakwi district have been blamed for frustrating efforts by the local community to stop charcoal burning.

Robert Asede, the district secretary for production; Samuel Opus, the traffic Police boss) and Marion Atim, the former district secretary for production, are among those blamed for abetting charcoal burning.

The Community Advocates (CAs) formed by GOAL-Uganda, a charity that advocates social accountability on health, said environmental degradation is a major problem in Katakwi.

This, according to the organisation, was the major cause of poverty, food shortage and climatic change (especially floods). This is because many people are involved in the cutting down of trees for charcoal burning, it says.

The role of the CAs is to inform the local leaders (offices of the LC5 chairperson, district Police commander and the chief administrative officer (CAO) about the burning and sale of charcoal so that those involved in such trade are apprehended and fined as per the recent district council resolution.

Last year, the council resolved that any person found with more than five bags of charcoal would be fined sh20,000 per bag. The Police also charge overloading fee on the trucks carrying charcoal outside the district.

The district leaders said the fine was put in place to deter those involved in the business.

However, the resolution was not enforced. It was until October this year when GOAL-Uganda came in to awaken leaders who then committed to implement the resolution.

Daniel Iyeset, the chairperson of the CAs in Katakwi, said Asede and Opus get money from the charcoal dealers to allow them operate while Atim is involved in the charcoal trade.

"These people have become a hindrance to stopping charcoal trade in the district," Iyeset said during a meeting on Tuesday.

Opus denied taking bribes from charcoal dealers. He said he arrests them on the instructions of his boss.

Atim said she only burned and sold charcoal after getting the wood when clearing her garden while Asede said the charcoal dealers whom he has been tough on are the ones accusing him.

Emmanuel Ekwith, the district forest officer Katakwi, commended the CAs for supporting them. He said they have reduced charcoal



Daniel Iyeset, the chairperson of Community Advocates in Katakwi district. Photo by Emmanuel Alomu

WHAT PEOPLE SAY

Helen

Martha

Achan,

Palam sub-

county:

The leaders

of Katakwi

should

liaise with their

counterparts in the

neighbouring districts so

that charcoal burning is

addressed.

John Robert Elangot,

Ngariam sub-county:

The district authorities

should stop issuing

licences to charcoal

dealers.

Emmanuel Oobe,

Magoro sub-county:

People should also

stop cultivating in the

wetlands because this is

another cause of floods.

will face disciplinary action

because they are contravening

the council resolution.

Elakas, however, encouraged

the CAs to take photographs

of the officers extorting money

from the charcoal dealers so

that they are pinned down

with evidence.

The Katakwi district

acting Police commander,

Peter Oduko, promised to

investigate Opus for the

alleged extortion.

Eria Magumba, the CAO

Katakwi, said he would

discipline the officers involved

in the extortion. He said if

sh15m or more was being

collected, then the district

could use that to establish

wood lots so that people plant

other tree species.

Magumba said earlier, they

used to collect sh800,000

within a period of six months.

It is the office of the CAO

which was charged with

collecting money or fines from

charcoal dealers.

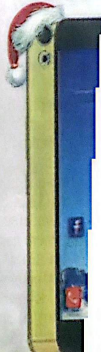
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