

# Charcoal burning law bites environment hard

**AMURIA**

By Emmanuel Opio

As the Environmental Protection Police Unit (EPPU) tightens its efforts to conserve the environment, its success in Amuria district has been stalled by the environmental ordinance passed in 2009.

This was noted by the EPPU officials during an operation against deforestation on Thursday.

"There are loopholes in this district's environmental ordinance that should be harmonised with the national law to ease its implementation," Simon Peter Okoshi, the deputy commandant of EPPU, said.

The bylaw in question authorises sub-county chiefs to license individuals to burn charcoal, contrary to the National Environment Act, Cap 153 that gives only the district forest officers such a prerogative.

Okoshi said the extraction of forest products has been simplified by giving the chiefs the mandate to issue licences to charcoal burners and traders, a move which has hiked environmental degradation.

"Controlling charcoal burning has become difficult because the district has replaced the National Environment Act with the district ordinance, superseding the national regulations," Okoshi noted.

He challenged the district to repeal the ordinance and asked the forest officers to guide the district in formulating an ordinance that conforms with the national environmental law.

Paul Egelu, the Amuria district forestry officer, acknowledged the existence of legal disparities between the district ordinance and the National Environment Act. He pledged to bring the matter to the attention of the district leaders.

Despite the short comings, Egelu blamed the rampant charcoal burning in the district to low staffing and limited funding to the natural resources department, which he said cripples their efforts to sensitise the residents on environmental conservation.

"We are only two members in the natural resources department



Okoshi interrogating one of the suspected charcoal traders in Amuria district. Photo by Emmanuel Opio

**WHAT RESIDENTS SAY ABOUT THE DEGRADERS**



**Sarah Amuge**  
The law should be interpreted for the people to avoid messing up with the environment.



**Michael Amukur**  
The government should appreciate best environment conservers to boost the morale of curbing environmental degradation.

serving 15 sub-counties. We receive sh200,000 quarterly for running the office," Deogratious Ekosile, the district environment officer, noted.

Michael Amukur, the LC1 chairperson of Olilia B village in Okungur sub-county, appealed to the local leaders to organise environmental sensitisation campaigns to curb charcoal burning, an act he said is caused by ignorance of the environmental law.

**About the ordinance**

The ordinance was published by the Solicitor General. It was duly certified by the Attorney General and endorsed on June 15, 2009 on behalf of the first Parliamentary Counsel and Rachel Nsiyona, the State Attorney.

It was later forwarded to the permanent secretary, Ministry of Local Government for transmission.

The ordinance provides for licensing of forest activities, movement permits and wetland user permits. It is aimed at preserving traditional tree species, such as the tamarind, shea nut and mango.

**Police operations**

During the Police operations in Amuria district, that was funded by the National Environment Management Authority, two people were arrested in Ocuma village, Asamuk sub-county over charcoal burning and trade.

The duo, Daniel Oukot, 18, and Gilbert Amoku, 36, were detained at Amuria Central Police Station.



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By Roger

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