NATURE TALK AFRICA

# NATA'S ANNUAL REPORT, 2025

STRENGTHENING COMMUNITY POWER, PROTECTING ENVIRONMENTAL HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS (EHRDS), AND ADVANCING CLIMATE JUSTICE IN THE ALBERTINE'S OIL-HOST COMMUNITIES.

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY.

The year 2025 marked a defining period for Nature Talk Africa (NaTA) as we consolidated our role as a frontline, youth-led, community-based organization advancing climate justice, environmental protection, land and indigenous peoples' rights, and the protection of Environmental and Human Rights Defenders (EHRDs) in Uganda's oil-host communities.

Through out 2025, NaTA directly engaged more than 3,000 community members, including youth activists, women leaders, farmers, and grassroots EHRDs across Hoima, Buliisa, and Kikuube districts in the Albertine region. Operating in a context of shrinking civic space, prolonged legal battles, and heightened risks to defenders, we implemented an integrated program approach combining community organizing, legal empowerment, protection and wellbeing, advocacy, and sustainable livelihoods as briefly summarized in this annual report.

## PROGRAM'S COMMUNICATION.

We extend our heartfelt gratitude to our community allies and to our local, national, and international partners and supporters who have stood with us in solidarity. Your belief in our work, your voices, and your actions made these achievements possible. In moments of uncertainty and pressure, your amplification of our stories strengthened our visibility, built meaningful connections, and reminded us that we are not alone.

As we worked under a shrinking civic space and an increasingly hostile political environment, marked by heightened security threats and sustained attacks on civil society organizations, climate activists, and human rights defenders in Uganda; your solidarity became a source of protection, courage, and hope. Through collaborative actions, technical guidance, and financial support, you helped us remain present in our communities, grounded in our values, and steadfast in our commitment to justice.

Looking ahead to 2026, we move forward with renewed determination. Together with you, we aim to deepen community organizing in oil-affected regions, strengthen the protection and wellbeing of land, indigenous environmental, and human rights defenders, and expand community-led climate resilience and livelihood initiatives. We will continue to amplify grassroots voices, build stronger alliances across borders, and invest in research, advocacy, and collective action that challenges injustice while nurturing community resilience.

Our journey continues because of you. Your solidarity sustains our courage, and your partnership fuels our vision for a just, inclusive, and resilient future where communities and nature can truly thrive.

**Programs director NaTA,**
**Emmanuel Ongyeer.**

## KEY MILESTONES DURING THE YEAR, 2025.

This annual report integrates learning and impact from all four quarters of 2025, offering our allies, communities, donors and partners a comprehensive view of NaTA's relevance, effectiveness, and strategic direction for 2026. With partners' solidarity support and community collective actions, we have recorded the following major achievements in 2025.

- **The dismissal of criminal charges against 20 climate and land rights activists**, seven of whom were community young activists and directly supported by NaTA and other partners. They now feel more encouraged because of our solidarity with them. We further **strengthened their advocacy and activism through capacity-building trainings.**
- With partners under the stopEACOP coalition network in Uganda, we developed the **peoples' agenda** in our communities, to act as a common guide for our community advocacy and demand political leadership in environmental and social rights protection amidst oil and gas development projects.
- **Legal empowerment and UN human rights mechanisms training** for 70 grassroots defenders in the Albertine region, Uganda that has created more curiosity among our community organizers and defenders to know more about the existing legal processes and UN mechanisms and standards.
- We supported over 5 community-led, **non-violent, peaceful and lawful actions;** protests, petitions, and dialogues demanding accountability from oil companies and government institutions with our partners that have resulted in renewed trust in NaTA's existence from our allies including our community people.
- Strengthened and formalized two community livelihood groups, farmer and youth initiatives; the Nyahaira youth initiatives and the **Nyakasinina Horticulture Group** with a district level recognized certificate as a self-help group among others.
- We carried out a major research on risks and protection gaps facing EHRDs in Uganda's oil and gas sector. The publication of the research report is scheduled for Febuary, 2026 with effective recommendations for all stakeholders in making sure to avail good work environment for grassroots community organizers, climate activists and frontline land, indigenous environmental and human rights defenders. Keep your eyes open for this community-led action research findings; demanding protection.
- Production of community owned documentaries with Oil Refinery Residents Association (ORRA) to amplify local **EHRDs' voices,** demanding transparency, accountability and **justice in court processes.**

## ORGANIZATIONAL BACKGROUND AND OPERATING CONTEXT.

Nature Talk Africa (NaTA) is a youth-led, community-based, non-profit organization founded in 2023 and fully registered in 2024 in Hoima District, mid-western Uganda. NaTA was established by young leaders directly and indirectly affected by large-scale oil and gas projects, including the Oil Refinery Project, Tilenga, Kingfisher, and the East African Crude Oil Pipeline (EACOP).

These projects, led by multinational corporations such as TotalEnergies and CNOOC in partnership with the Government of Uganda, have resulted in: l**and dispossession, little and delayed compensation, loss of livelihoods and food insecurity, environmental degradation and increasing water source exposure to contamination, gendered negative impacts affecting women and girls disproportionately, criminalization, intimidation, and surveillance of community organizers, climate activists and Environmental Human Rights Defenders (EHRDs).**

NaTA exists to ensure that affected communities are organized, informed, protected, and empowered to defend their rights, protect nature, and advance people-centered, climate-resilient alternatives to fossil-fuel-driven development.

In 2025, NaTA implemented its work through five interconnected program pillars:

- *Community climate activism and grassroots mobilization/organization.*
- *Legal empowerment and access to justice.*
- *Protection, Safety, and Wellbeing of EHRDs.*
- *Sustainable livelihoods and community resilience.*
- *Grassroot movement building, partnerships, and advocacy amplification.*

This integrated approach aligns strongly with locally led development, civic space protection, gender and youth justice, climate action, and just transition pathways

## PROGRAM ACTIVITIES, 2025.

### a). Community climate activism and grassroots mobilization.

Key highlights included a climate change awareness football gala in February 2025, community dialogues across Hoima, Buliisa and Kikuube, a community-led People's Tribunal in partnership with EACOP HC and ORRA held during Africa Week of Action in August 2025 and a joint end of year community organizer's reflection meeting where we launched the people's agenda document. These platforms enabled peaceful civic engagement, intergenerational dialogues, and public documentation of oil-related injustices.

**Outcomes:**

- Over 1,000 community members engaged through public events and dialogues.
- 1,200+ climate education materials distributed in local languages (Alur and Runyoro) and English.
- Active organizing in 15+ oil-affected villages in Hoima, Buliisa and Kikuube districts with our partners.

### b). Legal empowerment and access to justice.

Legal injustice remains central to the lived realities of oil-affected communities. The oil refinery land acquisition project-affected persons' court case has seen numerous adjournments and prolonged delays since 2014 filled with support from Africa Institute for Energy Governance (AFIEGO) and ORRA. We have joined these partners in struggles to demand for our community justice through various means

**Outcomes:**

- 20 activists who were arrested in August, 2024 including 7 of our community organizers/EHRDs were acquitted in April 2025 following sustained solidarity and legal monitoring with our partners.
- Continuous court accompaniment for refinery-affected communities in a case ongoing for over 11 years now.
- Legal education sessions conducted in multiple villages, improving awareness of land rights and lawful protest.
- By the end of 2025, NaTA had supported legal empowerment activities reaching more than 110 community members and defenders, strengthening confidence, collective action, and engagement with formal justice systems.

## c). Protection, Safety and Wellbeing of Environmental Human Rights Defenders (EHRDs) in the Albertine region, Uganda.

NaTA priority of this program was not by choice, but the urgency with which the civic space is diminishing, the intimidations and targeted attacks are directed to community organizers, defenders and activists in our communities and yet these are not given much attention by community-based organizations. The national, regional and international organizations that exist to support frontline defenders and community organizers also have limited access to realities on grounds, some community organizers and defenders do not even know about them and therefore, at NaTA found it worth a point of major interest. Moving forward, protection, safety and well-being of community organizers and frontline defenders in oil-host communities of the Albertine region is our top priority program.

As threats intensified, NaTA prioritized organizational safety and continued operations, defender protection and strong partnership building as core program areas in 2025.

**Outcomes:**

- Capacity-building for 40 EHRDs on the right to assemble and freedom of expression.
- Conducted a training on Monitoring, Documenting and Reporting for 53 community organizers, activists and EHRDs in the Albertine region for evidence-base advocacy.
- Advanced UN human rights mechanisms training for 30 grassroots defenders in the Albertine region.
- Targeted security, digital safety, and psychosocial support training for 15 high-risk defenders.
- NaTA also conducted a research titled "Safeguarding Environmental Human Rights Defenders in Uganda's Oil and Gas Sector", to provide evidence-based recommendations for government, corporations, civil society, and international partners.

## d). Amplifying community voices and advocacy.

These efforts ensured that community realities informed national and global advocacy on climate justice, environment, business and human rights. We directly engaged over 5,000 people on our social media platforms who viewed our posts and interacted with our messages.

NaTA and her partners amplified grassroots voices through both online and offline platforms:

- Radio engagements reaching regional audiences on **roles of youth in environmental rights protection with our partners.**
- Documentary production highlighting defenders under siege and expressing community fatigue of prolonged legal battles.
- Participation in national and international advocacy spaces, including Universal Periodic Review (UPR) civil society processes organized by the National Coalition of Human Rights Defenders-Uganda.

## d). Sustainable livelihoods and community resilience building.

These initiatives benefited over 120 households, with women and youth taking leadership roles. For the circular economy models, NaTA in partnership with ORRA have proposed to expand the Nyakasinina Horticulture Gardens into a farmer learning site with proper waste management and organic farming practices, solar-powered drip irrigation and general green jobs learning tools.

Recognizing that advocacy is unsustainable without sustainable livelihoods, NaTA in partnership with ORRA supported community-led Agricultural livelihood alternatives:

**Key results:**

- Strengthened Nyakasinina Horticulture Group, now formally registered with district authorities as a recognized self-help group in Horticulture.
- Supported youth initiatives advancing climate-smart agriculture and agroecology, the Nyahaira Youth Initiative.
- Promoted alternatives such as fish farming, horticulture, beekeeping, and exploration of circular economy models.

## CROSS-CUTTING THEMES.

- **Gender and youth justice:** Women and youth faced heightened risks but also emerged as powerful leaders. As a coalition of community-based organizations; NaTA, ORRA, EACOP HC, existing community self-help groups such as; Nyakasinina Horticulture group, Tuyendembele Women's group among others have continued organizing communities and building solidarity and unity, resilience and collective actions for social and climate justice and protection of rights.
- **Shrinking civic space:** NaTA has developed a programming adapted to surveillance, arrests, and intimidation. We are directed to establish and build "Youth Climate Justice Advocacy Center" for resilience and solidarity, collective actions for justice and rights defense amid extractive industries-induced injustices.
- **Partnership and solidarity:** Impact was achieved through collaboration with our different communities, local partners; ORRA and EACOP Host Communities, national allies; such as AFIEGO, Youth for Green Communities, Fridays for Future Uganda, and international allies and supporters and therefore, we are open for more collaborations for collective actions for justice and respects of rights.

Nyahaira youth initiative progress assessment.

Community organizers' and EHRDs' capacity-building training in Monitoring, Documentation and reporting

Community organizers' and EHRDs' capacity-building training in risks identification and management

## CHALLENGES FACED.

- **Persistent criminalization and intimidation of defenders.** This cause fear among vulnerable communities, silences the voices of the oppressed, avail room for rule and divide strategies employed by our state and corporations' officials and this does not serve our interests, it serves the interests of the oppressors, for the benefits of extractives industries and thus causing both social, environmental/climate injustices.
- **Prolonged court cases draining community resources and advocacy appetite.** We need regular community updates on court case progress, build more community solidarity support to continuously advocate for fair judicial systems that serve both communities and corporations alike.
- **Limited access to psychosocial and emergency protection support.** This makes it hard for grassroots movement building and organizing work because of fear and stress-associated with this work in a very hostile environment of reduced civic space, increased intimidations and threats of arrests
- **Insufficient and inflexible funding for grassroots-led initiatives.** This limits our scope of operations and the scope of impacts we are creating.

## PROPOSED ACTION POINTS AND WAY FORWARD (2026–2030)

- Establish and operationalize a community-based EHRD protection mechanism.
- Scale legal empowerment and UN mechanisms literacy in local communities.
- Expand sustainable livelihood hubs as learning and resilience centers.
- Strengthen evidence-based documentation and digital storytelling.
- Deepen partnerships for collaboration, amplification of community-led initiatives and long-term funding opportunities.

## CONCLUSION AND CALL TO PARTNERSHIP.

The year 2025 demonstrated that organized, informed, and protected communities can challenge injustice and build dignified alternatives even in hostile environments. Nature Talk Africa stands at a critical growth point and invites donors, foundations, and allies to partner with us in strengthening grassroots power, protecting defenders, and advancing climate-just futures in Uganda and beyond.

Community tribunal session, PAPs listening to the testimonies of different oil projects' induced injustices in Hoima, Buliisa and Kikuube districts

Community legal update on Refinery peoples' court progress at Kyakaboga resettlement village .

Nyakasinina horticulture group formerly registered

# NATA'S INFORMATION

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These projects, led by multinational corporations such as TotalEnergies and CNOOC in partnership with the Government of Uganda, have resulted in: land dispossession and delayed compensation, loss of livelihoods and food insecurity, environmental degradation and anticipated high level of water source contamination, gendered impacts affecting women and girls disproportionately, criminalization, intimidation, and surveillance of community organizers and Environmental Human Rights Defenders (EHRDs).
**NaTA** exists to ensure that affected communities are organized, informed, protected, and empowered to defend their rights, protect nature, and advance people-centered, climate-resilient alternatives to fossil-fuel-driven development.

**NaTA's vision and mission statements:** NaTA seek to build resilient and sustainable communities where people and nature flourish together. Our work mission advances locally grounded, inclusive approaches to climate adaptation, youth and environmental rights protection, gender equity, and sustainable livelihoods.
We can achieve our mission through community organizing, civic and climate justice education, youth leadership development, advocacy, partnerships, and sustainable community-led livelihood initiatives that strengthen climate change resilience building for grassroots communities and promote just, inclusive development in vulnerable communities.

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**Links to our website and social media platforms.**

Follow us on our social media handles to keep updated with our work:

1. **Website under development:** https://naturetalkafrika.org
2. **X (Twitter):** https://x.com/NatureTalk_A.
3. **Instagram:** https://www.instagram.com/naturetalk.africa
4. **LinkedIn:** https://www.linkedin.com/company/nature-talk-africa-nata/