In 2008, Sun Biofuels ltd, a British bi-
ofuels company acquired about 8000
hectares of land in the Kisawre district
in Tanzania to grow Jatropha. The land
acquired was the common property of
11 villages, it was mainly village land
but there were also private plots in the
area. The land was used by the villag-
ers to gather firewood and wood for
charcoal, mushrooms, to grow fruit
trees and most important to get wa-
ter; all those being non negligible
sources of income for the farmers.

Mhaga is one of the affected villages;
they lost about 1700 hectares to Sun
Biofuels company. The Mhaga vil-
lagers say they never wanted to sell
their land but they did not have any
other choice given that all the other
villages agreed to the sale. So far the
village government have not received
any payment for the land, only few
villagers have been compensated
for the trees they owned in the area.

Sun Biofuels Ltd. Did also commit it-
self to help developing the region by
improving the infrastructures (to dig
water wells, to build better roads, to
open a health centre ...) for the vil-
lages. So far nothing has been done
and the villagers lost access to wa-
ter they used to gather there. Now
the women have to walk five kilome-
tres to get water for their household.

When Sun Biofuels started its activi-
ties, about 700 jobs have been cre-
ated for the villagers in the Jatropha
farming. Unfortunately, those jobs did
not meet the expectations of the vil-
lagers and almost all the employees
have been terminated by now. The
higher wages at first promised by the
company have not been paid and the
working conditions have been harmful
to the employees. The workers using
poisonous pesticides did not receive
the appropriate protective gear and
can feel the impacts on their health.

Lately, during the summer 2011, Sun
Biofuels stopped its operations and
terminated most of the workers. Ru-
mour says the company has been sold
to a new investor. Since then the vil-
lagers are afraid they will never re-
ceive the compensations and the ben-
efits promised by the company and the
workers do not know if they will re-
ceive the terminal benefits stipulated
in their contract. Therefore the vil-
lagers started to take actions to fight
for their rights. Three of the villages
created a common task force to rep-
resent themselves and negotiate - with
the help of the district government
- with Sun Biofuels Ltd. The work-
ers on their side took a lawyer in or-
der to obtain their terminal benefits.
All of them are waiting for the settle-
ment of their cases and the response
from the company in the next month.
Minazahi Udouu Miaka
farmer Mhaga village
Salma Nassoro
farmer Mhaga village
Amina Aliy Udlele
farmer Mhaga village
Halena Ally
farmer Mhaga village
Mzara Sulhani Kirumbi
farmer Mhaga village
Saidi Abasi
farmer Mhaga village
Juma Kilumbi
farmer Mhaga village
Hamedi Pembe Mlawa
farmer Mhaga village
Nassoro Halfani Nogaeka
farmer Mhaga village
Vita

Kiên is a ‘82 born, Berlin-based photographer whose origins are Vietnamese.

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