



Kiên Hoàng Lê

photography

:: Landgrab Sunbiofuels ::

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Landgrab Tanzania

Mhaga Village

Text by Johana Suobodova

In 2008, Sun Biofuels Ltd, a British biofuels 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 villagers to gather firewood and wood for charcoal, mushrooms, to grow fruit trees and most important to get water; 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 villagers 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 itself to help developing the region by improving the infrastructures (to dig water wells, to build better roads, to open a health centre ...) for the villages. So far nothing has been done and the villagers lost access to water they used to gather there. Now the women have to walk five kilometres to get water for their household.

When Sun Biofuels started its activities, about 700 jobs have been created for the villagers in the Jatropha farming. Unfortunately, those jobs did not meet the expectations of the villagers 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. Rumour says the company has been sold to a new investor. Since then the villagers are afraid they will never receive the compensations and the benefits promised by the company and the workers do not know if they will receive the terminal benefits stipulated in their contract. Therefore the villagers started to take actions to fight for their rights. Three of the villages created a common task force to represent themselves and negotiate - with the help of the district government - with Sun Biofuels Ltd. The workers on their side took a lawyer in order to obtain their terminal benefits. All of them are waiting for the settlement of their cases and the response from the company in the next month.

Minazahi Udouu Miaka
farmer Mhaga village



Salma Nassoro
farmer Mhaga village



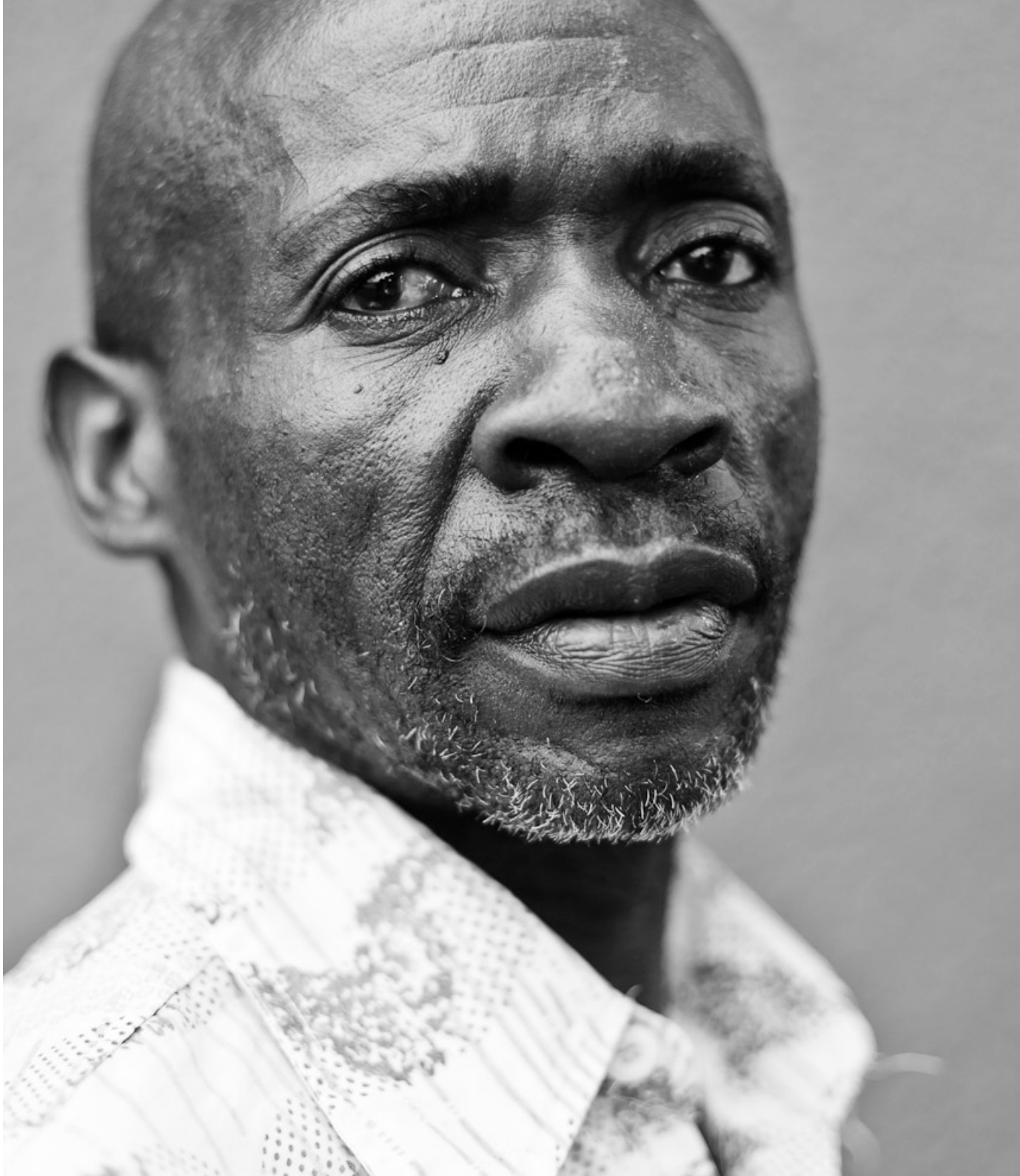
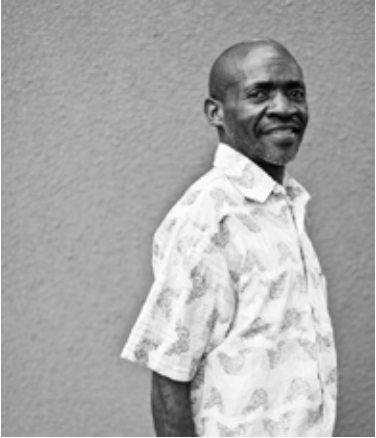
Amina Aliy Udlele
farmer Mhaga village



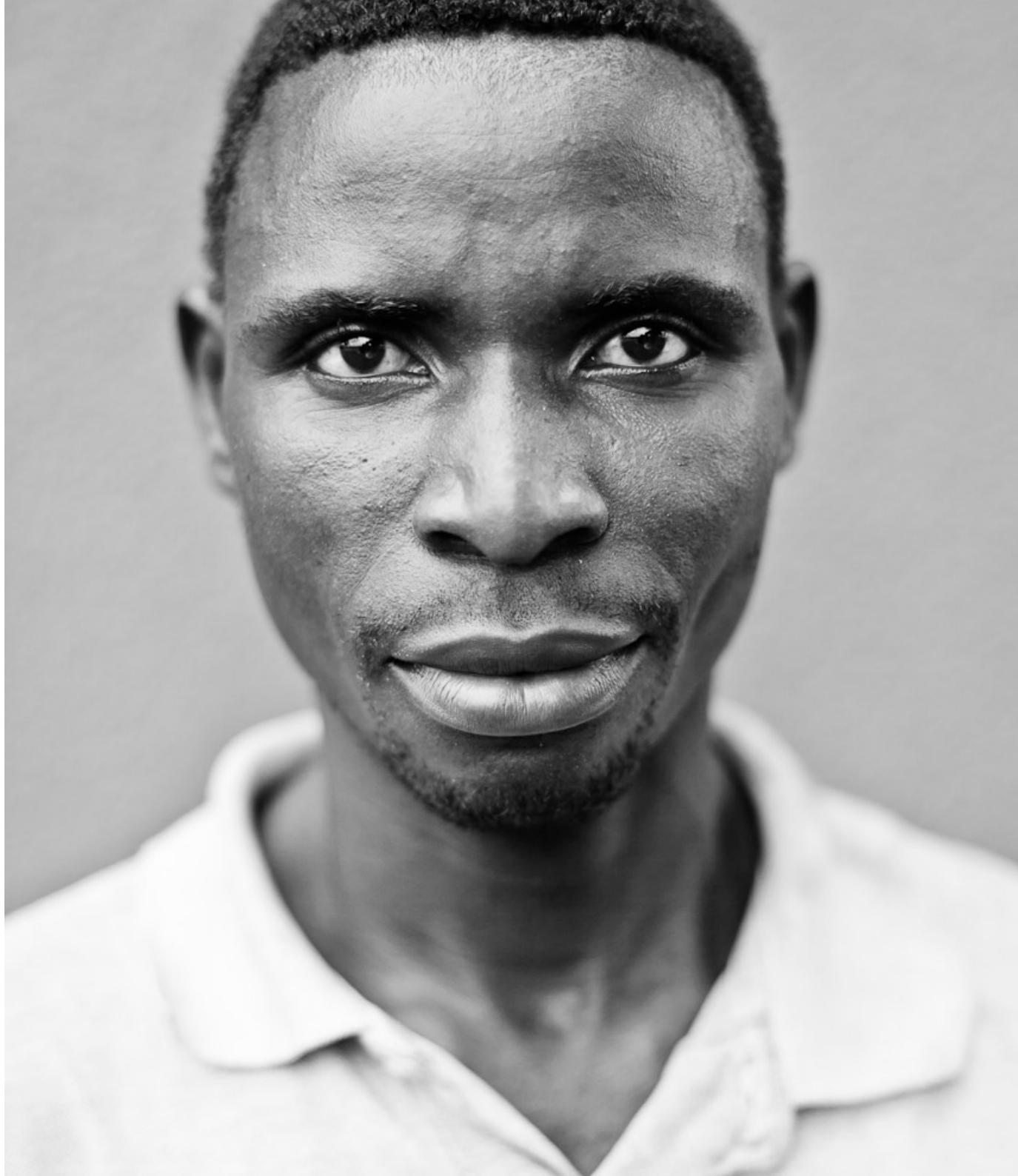
Halena Ally
farmer Mhaga village



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





Kiên Hoàng Lê

photography


Vita

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

His photographic work is focussing on socially driven documentary and journalistic Photography.

He was born in Hanoi - Northern Vietnam -, grew up in Bogensee - East Germany - and has lived in the UK, India and Australia.

Since 2009 he is persuing his studies in Photojournalism & Documentary Photography at the University of Applied Sciences Hannover.



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