

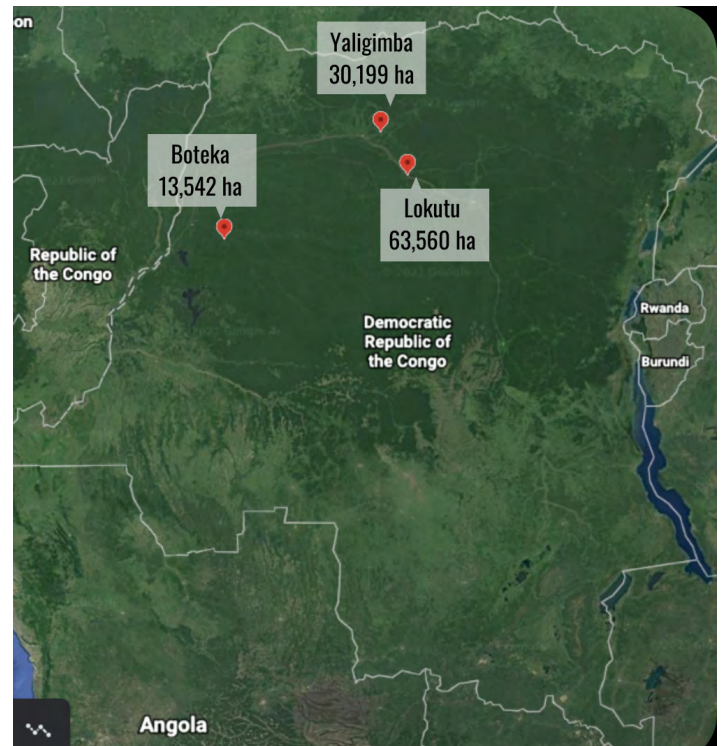
MEET THE INVESTORS BEHIND THE PHC OIL PALM PLANTATIONS IN DRC



From King Leopold to Kuramo Capital Management— A Legacy of Stolen Land & Human Rights Abuses

For over a century, the Lokutu, Yaligimba, and Boteka communities in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) have been forcibly displaced from their ancestral land. In 1911, the Belgian colonial authorities, who had violently taken control of present day DRC, granted British industrialist Lord Leverhulme license to create vast oil palm plantations for his company Plantations et Huileries du Congo (PHC)—without consent from local communities. In 1929, the plantations fell under the control of the newly created Unilever.

The 100,000 hectares oil palm concessions passed from Unilever to Feronia in 2009. Despite receiving over [US\\$150 million](#) in financing from European development banks since 2013, Feronia filed for bankruptcy in 2020. The development banks then agreed to pass the assets they held in PHC to a consortium led by Kuramo Capital Management (KCM), for a cash payment of US\$500,000 and agreed to write off large portions of their remaining debt. The deal was conditional on the new owners investing US\$10 million in PHC and implementing a revised environmental and social action plan.



Community members of Mwingi near the disputed land of the Lokutu concession © Oskar Epelde.

In March 2021, the Oakland Institute released *In King Leopold's Steps*, that revealed the KCM investors who are bankrolling the PHC oil palm plantations. Before the KCM consortium became majority owners in November 2020, they previously held a minority share dating back to 2017. Upon taking over, the KCM consortium committed to pursue a mediation process with the [International Complaints Mechanism](#) that had been agreed to between PHC, the development bank funders, and nine local communities in January 2019.

While ownership changed hands, the communities remained deprived of their land and subjected to human rights abuses. Numerous reports have documented the human and environmental abuses that were inflicted on them, including: poor wages, exposure to dangerous pesticides, denial of compensation for injuries on the job¹ and the routine dumping of untreated industrial waste, which contaminated a major supply of local drinking water. The dispossession from ancestral land crippled livelihoods, as poverty and hunger became widespread.

Congolese security forces and plantation security guards have been involved in the arrests, beatings, and accused of even killings of villagers, including [Blaise Mokwe](#) and [Efolafola Nisoni Manu](#), killed in February 2021. An independent investigation carried out in September 2021 revealed how the violence perpetrated against community members continues unabated. On September 14, 2021 DRC soldiers and industrial guards from PHC allegedly destroyed dozens of homes, “committed systematic looting in several villages, including torture and kidnapping of civilians from communities surrounding the plantations.”² In January 2022, a local NGO, RIAO–RDC reported that after a group of PHC workers at the Boteka plantation went on strike in protest of poor wages, PHC called in the police and military who opened fire on the protestors, seriously wounding two workers.

Police crackdowns on communities have been driven by alleged theft of palm fruits and labor disputes. In a letter³ sent to the Oakland Institute on January 26, 2022, PHC stated: “we have seen an increase in palm fruit thefts at our sites by community members, which has produced a corresponding increase in law enforcement activity by local police,” and that “unfortunately some of these encounters between police and community members have escalated to violence.” PHC distances itself from this violence, claiming that “illegal activities are referred to local authorities whose actions are beyond PHC’s control,” and

that “while PHC does not control the police force, we disprove of any use of violence.”⁴

These denials and PHC’s attempts to distance itself from the abuses do not change the fact that local authorities and security forces use unchecked and overwhelming force and inflict severe human rights abuses to protect the company’s interests. Local NGOs maintain [calls for an international investigation](#) into these grave human rights abuses.

This report details who is behind the PHC oil palm plantation: Kuramo Capital Management (KCM) — the investment management firm that owns the majority stake in the PHC plantations — and the major foundations, university endowments, and pension funds who are involved in the plantations through their investments in KCM. While several of these actors make lofty claims of the principles guiding their investments, they have failed to alter their investments into KCM despite the continuing human rights abuses and land theft.



February 2021, coffin of Blaise Mokwe left outside the PHC office in protest.



Who Owns the PHC Plantations?

KURAMO CAPITAL MANAGEMENT



Kuramo Capital Management (KCM) is an investment management firm that first invested in the PHC plantations in 2017, at a time the wrongdoings of the company and the many issues faced by local communities had been already widely [documented](#). Whereas none of these were solved and more abuses were [reported](#) by human rights organizations, the company assumed majority ownership in 2020 through a Mauritius-based private equity fund named Straight KKM. KCM's shares are now held through a subsidiary called KN Agri (see chart p. 15).

Since it acquired majority ownership, KCM has continued to ignore community demands to negotiate the return of their land. Instead, KCM's management has reportedly been pressuring community leaders to sign agreements⁵ with the company that undermine the mediation process with the [International Complaints Mechanism](#) that began over two years ago.

KCM provides "targeted global investment management services to institutional clients and ultra-high net worth individuals, focused on alternative assets in emerging and frontier markets." In a 2016 [video](#), KCM emphasized that its goal is to "ensure that the African dream is reachable to every young African who can inspire and dare to dream." Following the publication of *In King Leopold's Steps* in March 2021, KCM denied any responsibility for the documented abuses on the concessions. In a [press release](#), KCM called their investment into the PHC plantations "one of our most important recent investments" and highlighted PHC as the "largest private employer" in DRC, ignoring the well documented, aforementioned [labor abuses](#) taking place.

Headquartered in New York City, KCM has additional offices in Lagos and Nairobi. As of 2020, KCM listed [US\\$433 million](#) in assets under management and is additionally the general partner of the Kuramo Africa Opportunity Funds (KAOF).

KCM was founded by current Chief Investment Officer, [Walé F. Adeosun](#), who previously served as the Managing Director of the Investments Group of the [Macarthur Foundation](#) as well as the Chairman of the Investment Advisory Committee of the US\$200 billion New York State Common Retirement Fund. Adeosun additionally serves as Chairman of the [Nigeria](#)

[Higher Education Foundation](#), and previously served on former President Obama's Advisory Council on Doing Business in Africa. KCM's other partners include Co-Chief Investment Officer [Shaka M. Kariuki](#) and Chief Operating Officer, Kamal Pallan.

Over the past decade, KCM claims to have over the past decade "catalyzed nearly [US]\$3 billion in investment capital to more than 200 Africa based companies that have improved the livelihoods of more than 100,000 people." KCM holds investments in 20 Sub-Saharan African countries across power, telecoms, financial services, and consumer sectors. While the company does not disclose a comprehensive list of investments, several have made news in recent years. In Kenya, KCM has a [25 percent equity stake](#) in [TransCentury](#), an investment and infrastructure company with numerous subsidiaries in 12 countries across Africa, as well as over [90 percent ownership](#) of GenAfrica, a large investment management firm for institutional clients, such as pension funds. KCM also holds a [minority stake](#) in the Kenyan Investment Bank [Sterling Capital Ltd](#) and additionally made a [US\\$15 million](#) commitment to the [CardinalStone Capital Advisers Growth Fund](#), who in turn hold investments ranging from agribusiness to industrial and financial services in Ghana and Nigeria. In Nigeria, KCM has also provided an undisclosed amount of initial funding to [Green Africa Airways](#), which began service in 2021.



Wale Adeosun. Source: <https://www.kuramocapital.com/about/team/wale-f-adeosun/>.



JIDE ZEITLIN AND THE KEFFI GROUP



Jide Zeitlin. Screenshot: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eViL4V9-iaM&ab_channel=GoodMorningAmerica.

The Keffi Group, a private investment firm founded in 2006 and owned by Jide Zeitlin, has an ownership stake between 25 and 50 percent in KCM, dating back to 2011. Zeitlin is therefore an indirect owner of KCM.

While Zeitlin's career has included several prominent positions, he has been embroiled in numerous controversies. A former senior investment banker and partner at Goldman Sachs, Zeitlin left the company in 2005 and founded the Keffi Group to pursue investments in the Middle East, the US, and Africa.

In 2009, Zeitlin's company Independent Mobile Infrastructure Ltd (IMIL), which owned, leased, and operated wireless towers in India, was accused by dozens of contractors of failing to provide payment for services and sued for US\$2.4 million by one vendor. A New Delhi Court subsequently ordered the liquidation of IMIL. While IMIL apparently reached a settlement to end the dispute, it is currently listed as "under liquidation."

Despite these setbacks, Zeitlin continued to assume other roles, including serving on the boards of Teach for America (1994-2013), Harvard Business School (2004-2016), Chairman of the Board of Amherst College (2005-2015) and the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation (2006-2017). Zeitlin was appointed Chairman of the Board of Tapestry, parent company of Kate Spade and Coach luxury fashion brands in 2014, after serving on the Board since 2006. In 2019, he became the CEO of Tapestry, making him the fifth Black CEO of a Fortune 500 company. A moving essay published following the murder of George Floyd catapulted Zeitlin into the spotlight as a corporate champion for social change and racial justice.

Zeitlin's tenure as CEO was short lived as he resigned under a year into his term. As detailed in a ProPublica story, Zeitlin

allegedly used a false identity to photograph numerous women and entered into a consensual relationship with one of the women he was photographing. When the woman later discovered he had been using a false identity, she worked to expose Zeitlin's hidden life by contacting FBI agents and the media. The story had initially gained traction in 2009 and reportedly played a role in derailing Zeitlin's nomination by the US to oversee financial reform at the United Nations.

In 2020, when the same allegations resurfaced, Tapestry launched an investigation into Zeitlin who then abruptly resigned. Zeitlin additionally resigned from his position on the board of directors of the global asset management company Affiliated Managers Group. His role as Chairman of the Board of the Nigeria Sovereign Investment Authority, the institution that has managed the country's sovereign wealth fund since 2011, ended in May 2021 after his term expired.

Zeitlin has maintained his role as Managing Director at Keffi Group and has taken on several new ventures. He is the Co-Chairman and CEO of Integrated Energy Materials (IEM), a company "built on a base of world-class battery metal mining assets" with a focus on "developing the innovative large-scale refining and cathode battery cell manufacturing required to drive decarbonization." Adeosun and Mpinga additionally serve on the board of IEM. Though Zeitlin's involvement with KCM has largely remained out of the spotlight, Adeosun has praised him as someone who "supports [KCM] unequivocally and backs you all the way."



Truckload of oil palm fruits © Dominique Lumpempe Kangamina.



DRC GOVERNMENT

Dating back to [Unilever's majority ownership](#) of the PHC concessions, the DRC government has been the second largest shareholder, with a 24 percent ownership stake (see chart p. 15). Despite continued efforts by local communities and NGOs, the government has turned a blind eye to the human rights abuses taking place and has yet to take any significant action to investigate or address the situation. Even worse, state security forces have been implicated in violence against the communities living adjacent to the plantations. The independent investigation that took place in September 2021 found that alongside PHC security guards, the soldiers of the Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of Congo (FARDC) were directly involved in acts of looting, kidnapping, torture, and destruction of property.⁶



MAFUTA INVESTMENT HOLDING LTD



Kafia Mpunga. Source: <https://www.materials.energy/leadership.html>.

Through a 10 percent stake in Feronia KNM, Mafuta Investment Holding Ltd has an indirect ownership stake of the PHC plantations. As of [July 2019](#), corporate lawyer and investment banker Kofi Appenteng held 20 percent of Mafuta, unlisted investors held 10 percent, with Kafia Mpunga holding the remaining 70 percent.

Kafia Mpunga is the son of a former Prime Minister of DRC and is a [major player](#) in diamond and gold mining across Africa. Mpunga has held [leadership positions](#) at several prominent corporations including the [Bechtel Corporation](#), the [Anglo](#)

[American Mining Corporation](#) in South Africa and [Group Five Limited](#), a leading African construction, concessions and manufacturing group.

In 2003, Mpunga founded Mwana Africa—a mining group with assets of gold and nickel in Zimbabwe and copper in the DRC—and held the Chief Executive position until 2015. In 2017, Mpunga's Mafuta Investment Holdings first acquired shares of Feronia alongside Kuramo Capital Management. Despite the documented history of land theft and abuses that have taken place on the plantations, Mpunga has hailed the investment as a model for other international investors to follow, [stating](#): “We hope that this investment draws attention within the local and international community as to the great potential of the DRC and, in particular, its agricultural sector.”

Kofi Appenteng holds 20 percent of Mafuta Investment Holding Ltd.⁷ Appenteng's resume includes several key positions at major financial investment firms and philanthropic organizations. Formerly the Chair of the Board of the [Ford Foundation](#)—the US\$12 billion grant-making foundation—Appenteng remains on the [Board of the Conrad N. Hilton Foundation](#). He is also the President and CEO of the [Africa-America Institute](#), a US-based organization with the stated goal of “dedicated to strengthening human capacity of Africans and promoting the continent's development through higher education and skills training, convening activities, program implementation and management.”



LARRY SERUMA & KURAMO NILE CAPITAL MANAGEMENT

Larry Seruma founded Nile Capital Management, an asset management firm headquartered in Princeton, New Jersey in 2004. Catering to institutional investors, professional money managers, and high net worth individuals, Nile Capital focuses on investments in consumer goods, infrastructure, and natural resources and agriculture across Africa. In an [early profile](#), Seruma highlighted Africa's vast potential for growth as farmers modernize and countries build infrastructure to export more of their minerals.

In 2011, Seruma faced a lawsuit from a former Nile Global employee who claimed that Seruma failed to disclose that he had been employed for three years by Madoff Securities,⁸ the now infamous hedge fund responsible for the [largest ponzi scheme in history](#). The lawsuit additionally claimed Mr. Seruma overstated the assets under management of Nile Capital.

Despite these potentially damaging allegations, in 2017, KCM and Nile Capital Management launched Kuramo Nile as a strategic partnership between the two firms and Seruma became the Chief Investment Officer (CIO). Seruma [praised](#) “the new firm [as] a comprehensive investment platform for investors seeking to capitalize on Africa's growth potential and investment opportunities.” The harmonious partnership would however be short lived.

In 2021, an [explosive legal battle erupted](#), pitting Seruma against Adeosun and Mpinga for control of the PHC concessions. Four court procedures were initiated in Delaware, New York, Canada, and DRC, all of which center on who retains control of the plantations after a complex web of subsidiaries was used to make the purchase.

Adeosun and KCM have filed several complaints against Seruma, seeking to remove him from management as well as for significant financial damages. The Delaware complaint labels Seruma's actions as a “brazen ownership heist as it deprived Kuramo of its beneficial interest in PHC,” and goes on to accuse Seruma of “a pattern of stealing assets and opportunities rightfully belonging to Kuramo and the consortium, concealing information of fraudulent or criminal



Larry Seruma. Screenshot: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cKP88M_DOWg.

activity by Seruma...[which] potentially could constitute criminal acts under the laws of the [DRC].” The DRC government, which owns 24 percent of PHC, has additionally taken legal action against Seruma and accused him of “abuse and destabilization of the social organs of PHC.”

Seruma has brought two proceedings against KCM seeking legal authority over the plantations and claims that “Adeosun wants the upside potential of PHC for himself and wants to get me out of the picture. He wants more money.” In his complaints, Seruma has accused KCM of failing to satisfy its existing funding commitments and raised serious questions about KCM's financial health.

Both parties in the New York case say they are the rightful owners of company that they value at approximately US\$100 million, and for which they paid just a small fraction of its value. Far from the claimed goals of development and prosperity for the DRC, the legal battle suggests that this project is about greed and continued colonial exploitation.



Who Are KCM's Major Investors?

UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

The University of Michigan (UM) Endowment is the largest known investor in Kuramo Capital Management funds, having committed at least US\$125 million across several investment vehicles since 2011.

One of the leading public higher education institutions in the United States, the UM holds the ninth largest endowment among US universities at US\$12.5 billion. The endowment boasts top ranking long-term investment performance, with a 20-year annualized return rate of 7.4 percent. The endowment's contribution to the university budget was US\$391 million in 2020.

Sustained student mobilization has altered UM's investment decisions in the past. Over a decade of student opposition to the University's investments with corporations who did business with the apartheid regime in South Africa finally led to the



"The mission of the University of Michigan is to serve the people of Michigan and the world through preeminence in creating, communicating, preserving and applying knowledge, art, and academic values, and in developing leaders and citizens who will challenge the present and enrich the future."

—UM MISSION

University endowments, pension funds and philanthropic foundations have together invested over a hundred million dollars into funds managed by Kuramo Capital Management, who retain majority ownership over the PHC oil palm concessions. Photo: Palm tree plantation near Yangambi, DRC © Axel Fassio/CIFOR



**Plantation et Huileries du Congo (PHC)
Oil Palm Concession**

[UM fully divesting by 1988](#). More recently, the UM [announced](#) in March 2021 that it will divest from fossil fuels to achieve net-zero emissions across the endowment by 2050. Unrelenting student led advocacy has been credited as a [driving force](#) behind the decision, given UM had approximately [US\\$1.1 billion](#) invested in the fossil fuel industry before the announcement.

However, as the UM still lacks a guiding ethical investment policy, investment decisions remain driven by expected financial returns. Under current Chief Investment Officer [Erik Lundberg](#), the endowment has seen a large [expansion in investing abroad](#), particularly in developing markets.



University of Michigan Chief Investment Officer Erik Lundberg.
Source: <https://www.bf.umich.edu/about/leadership/>.

BILL & MELINDA GATES FOUNDATION



“Guided by the belief that every life has equal value, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation works to help all people lead healthy, productive lives. In developing countries, it focuses on improving people’s health and giving them the chance to lift themselves out of hunger and extreme poverty.” — BMGF FACTSHEET

The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation (BMGF) is the second largest known investor in Kuramo and has invested repeatedly in various Kuramo funds since 2011. In 2019, the value of these investments across four investment vehicles totaled US\$36,754,320.

The BMGF is the largest private philanthropic foundation in the world with assets totalling over [US\\$51 billion](#) as of 2019 and a mission aimed at “improving people’s health and giving them the chance to lift themselves out of hunger and extreme poverty.” The [primary role](#) of the BMGF Trust is to manage the investment assets—largely donated from Bill and Melinda Gates and Warren Buffet—and transfer proceeds to the foundation to “achieve the foundation’s charitable goals.” In 2019, the Trust transferred over US\$5.85 billion to the foundation which in turn contributed over US\$5.1 billion in grants and direct support across a variety of global health, “development,” gender equality, and agriculture initiatives.

The BMGF has been criticized for being the leading force promoting large-scale, industrial agriculture in Africa, driving a number of initiatives targeted at the continent. In 2006, alongside the

Rockefeller Foundation, the BMGF co-founded the Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa (AGRA). Despite the documented [failures](#) of their “Green Revolution” approach—centered on productivity with the increased use of hybrid patented seeds and chemical fertilizers, the BMGF has continued to leverage its [influence and resources](#) to push for policy changes and government subsidies beneficial to corporate interests at the expense of farmer livelihoods and the environment. While AGRA has been the primary recipient of the BMGF’s financing for industrializing agriculture in Africa—BMGF contributions totaled over US\$638 million to AGRA between 2006 and 2020—BMGF has additionally spent [hundreds of millions](#) financing research institutes and communication focused organizations that work to build consensus around the “safety” of biotechnology and genetically modified crops, working within the same “Green Revolution” framework.



Bill Gates. Source: <https://www.gatesfoundation.org/about/leadership/bill-gates>.



The Foundation's investment philosophy states that, keeping in line with the values of the Foundation, "[Bill and Melinda Gates] have defined areas in which the endowment will not invest, such as companies whose profit model is centrally tied to corporate activity that they find egregious." This includes

a current prohibition on tobacco and Sudan-related stocks. Yet, whereas it claims to "work to help all people lead healthy, productive lives," the Foundation does not ensure that its investments do not contribute to environmental degradation, land theft, and human rights abuses.

THE GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEES PENSION FUND (GEPF) & PUBLIC INVESTMENT CORPORATION (PIC) OF SOUTH AFRICA



"We take environmental, social and governance issues into account when making investment decisions. We also encourage the companies we invest in to implement sustainable practices, and to actively manage their environmental and social impacts while maintaining high levels of corporate governance standards."

— GEPF RESPONSIBLE INVESTMENT GUIDELINES

The Government Employees Pension Fund (GEPF), Africa's largest pension fund, manages pensions and related benefits on behalf of government employees in South Africa. The Public Investment Corporation (PIC) is the asset management company for GEPF and invests on behalf of the fund. In June 2016, PIC committed to invest US\$20 million to the Kuramo Africa Opportunity Fund II. As of 2020, GEPF's investment in Kuramo Africa Opportunity II was valued at US\$15,778,000.

GEPF's assets total R1.61 trillion [US\$110.7 billion] and it has more than 1.2 million active members from more than 325 government departments and about 450,000 pensioners and other beneficiaries. Established in 1911, PIC is Africa's largest asset manager with over US\$125 billion in controlled assets. All of PIC's clients are public sector entities with GEPF comprising 89 percent of its total assets under management.

A self-anointed "leader in responsible investment in South Africa," GEPF was a founding signatory to the United Nations Principles



PIC Office building. Source: <https://www.linkedin.com/company/public-investment-corporation/?originalSubdomain=za>.



of Responsible Investment (UNPRI) in 2006. The GEPF's [Responsible Investment](#) page states that: "We also encourage the companies we invest in to implement sustainable practices, and to actively manage their environmental and social impacts." Additionally, a "[Responsible Investment Policy](#)" statement from 2017 covers several issues to be considered in investment contexts that are relevant given the funds involvement in the PHC plantations, including: "local communities human rights, working conditions, conflict and resource depletion."

PIC also [prides itself](#) as a "global leader in impactful investing." As a [signatory](#) to the United Nations Global Compact (UNGC), it is "committed to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which seek to advance universal principles of human rights, labour, environment and anti-corruption." Additionally, as a signatory to the UN Principles for Responsible Investment (UNPRI), PIC's investment decisions are supposed to "be taken with consideration to social, environmental and governance factors."

WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY IN ST. LOUIS



"Washington University in St. Louis' mission is to discover and disseminate knowledge, and protect the freedom of inquiry through research, teaching and learning."

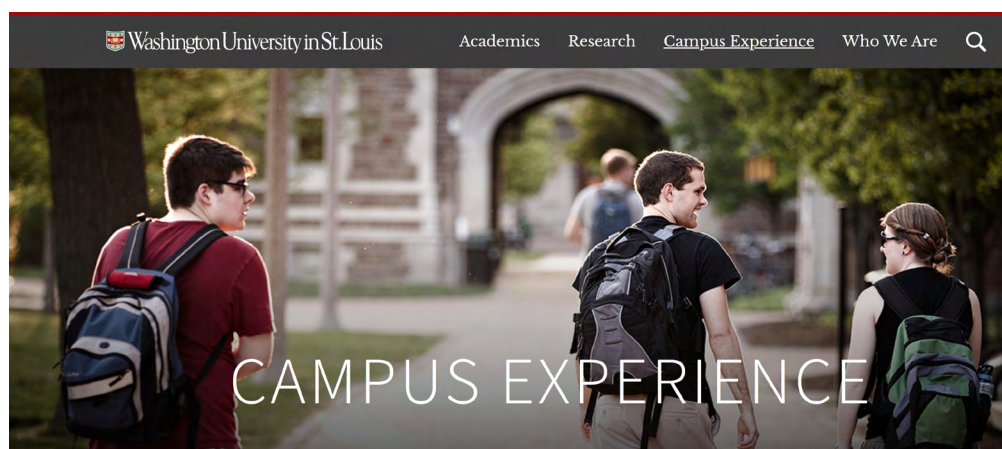
—[WUSTL MISSION](#)

In 2018, a judicial inquiry into PIC found "[substantial impropriety](#)" in regards to investment decisions, as the former CEO Dan Matjila and other senior management reportedly flouted internal decision making procedures. The inquiry recommended substantial changes to PIC's operating model and the South African National Assembly responded with an amendment to [give lawmakers greater control](#) over the fund manager.

PIC has [noted](#) Kuramo's "poor disclosure of ESG [Environmental, Social, Governance] issues," and claims it will continue to engage the company to "further enhance its ESG framework in line with the PIC ESG policies." Despite noting KCM's inadequate ESG policies and being sent further evidence of the continuing abuses taking place on the PHC plantations, neither PIC nor GEPF has yet to take any action.

Washington University in St. Louis (WUSTL) holds the 12th largest endowment among private universities at [US\\$8.5 billion](#). It has [invested](#) US\$13,117,669 in the Kuramo Africa Opportunity Co-Investment Vehicle III and US\$668,385 in Kuramo Africa Opportunity Fund III.

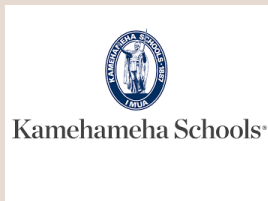
The University's Statement of Investment Principles [stipulates](#) that the endowment should "pursue investments in companies and strategies that have direct positive impact on the broad constituencies and communities they serve." The University's "[Be Ethical Stewards](#)" principle states that it: "does not seek to profit from the violation of basic human rights and dignity, abusive or oppressive labor practices, gross pollution or environmental destruction..." Investments in Kuramo funds overtly violate these laudable standards, as they tie Washington University to the abuses being inflicted on local communities in DR Congo.



Washington University in St. Louis campus website. Source: <https://wustl.edu/campus-experience/>.



KAMEHAMEHA SCHOOLS



“By operating world-class Hawaiian schools and engaging with communities to transform educational systems, we will raise ‘ōiwi leaders who are empowered and unified, and who will solve the issues of our people and communities.”

—OUR IMPACT

As of 2019, the Trustees of the Estate of Bernice Pauahi Bishop held US\$13,319,802 in Kuramo Africa Opportunity Fund, where it has invested since 2014.

Kamehameha Schools is a private charitable educational trust endowed by the will of Hawaiian princess Bernice Pauahi Bishop. The endowment was valued at [US\\$11.9 billion as of 2018](#).

The Kamehameha Schools work to improve access to education and advancing Native Hawaiian rights. The organization takes a whole-scale approach, claiming: “We understand the importance of meeting the needs of the whole child by also caring for the communities they live in and being responsible stewards of our land.” When informed of their connection to the environmental and human rights abuses taking place in DRC, the Kamehameha Schools failed to provide a response or justification for their investment.

ROYAL COUNTY OF BERKSHIRE PENSION FUND



“The fund invests in financial assets for the primary purpose of obtaining a return on investments.”

—2018/2019 ANNUAL REPORT

The Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead, which is the administrative authority of the Fund, [recognizes the importance of environmental, social, and governance considerations \(ESGs\)](#), but does not place explicit restrictions on investment managers, relying instead on them to “adhere to best practices in jurisdictions where they are based.”

While the Fund has several known [investments in farmland](#), information pertaining to these investments remains shrouded in secrecy. The Fund utilizes a legal workaround¹⁰ that allows it to avoid publicly disclosing all the information regarding their farmland investments. Some details on its farmland investments are [explicitly excluded](#) from official publications.

Following the publication of *In King Leopold’s Steps*, Royal County of Berkshire Pension Fund [stated](#) it had “no exposure to Straight KKM, the company that currently owns PHC, nor has it ever invested in the company.” Despite the aforementioned investment in KCM, the fund is shirking responsibility for how KCM has invested their money—a response that exemplifies how private equity affords investors the ability to claim they are not directly connected with problematic investments.

The Royal County of Berkshire Pension Fund invested £10 million [US\$13.6 million⁹] in “Kuramo Africa” in 2012—an investment scheduled to end in 2021.

Based in the UK, this public pension fund oversees assets totaling near US\$3 billion on behalf of local government employees in the County of Berkshire. [Investment returns](#) have reportedly been “strong” between 2016 and 2019, generating a return of 7.7 percent and a profit of £112 million (US\$152 million).



NORTHWESTERN UNIVERSITY



“Northwestern is committed to excellent teaching, innovative research and the personal and intellectual growth of its students in a diverse academic community.” —[NU MISSION](#)

Northwestern University has the tenth largest university endowment in the United States, valued [over US\\$11.08 billion](#). As of [2018](#), Northwestern held US\$7,892,466 in share of end of year assets in Kuramo Africa Opportunity Fund II, with

investments to the fund dating back to 2016. The Investment Office’s Mission and Vision at Northwestern states “We will maintain the highest ethical standards, which in turn will protect and enhance our reputation with the University’s many constituencies.” They have also signed onto the United Nations-supported Principles for Responsible Investment and incorporating “environmental, social and governance” principles into investment decisions.

Northwestern students have formed the “Fossil Free” campaign, specifically focusing on divestment from any of the top 100 coal and oil and gas companies and reinvestment in non-fossil fuel companies, particularly those with an emphasis on renewable energy. In February of 2020, the Investment Committee of the Board of Trustees [rejected](#) the initial divestment proposal.



Northwestern University Hall at 1897 Sheridan Road. Photo by David Lee, *Daily Northwestern* © Students Publishing Company, Inc. (SPC), <https://dailynorthwestern.com/2017/12/31/campus/endowment-grows-6-7-percent-likely-placing-nu-within-new-endowment-tax-threshold/>.



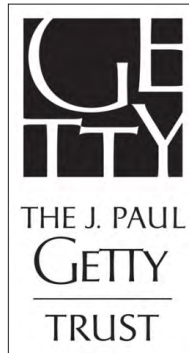
GENERAL ELECTRIC PENSION TRUST



The General Electric (GE) Pension Trust is a corporate fund investor that manages pension, retirement, health, and welfare funds. The trust, a subsidiary of GE's larger asset management activities, GE Asset Management

Incorporated, held assets totaling US\$52.6 billion at the end of 2019. According to Prequin, a private equity database, the GE Pension Fund invested in the Kuramo Africa Opportunity Fund II, however the amount and current status of the investment remains unknown. The GE Pension Trust did not respond to inquiries regarding the status of their investment made by the Oakland Institute on March 16, 2021.

J. PAUL GETTY FOUNDATION

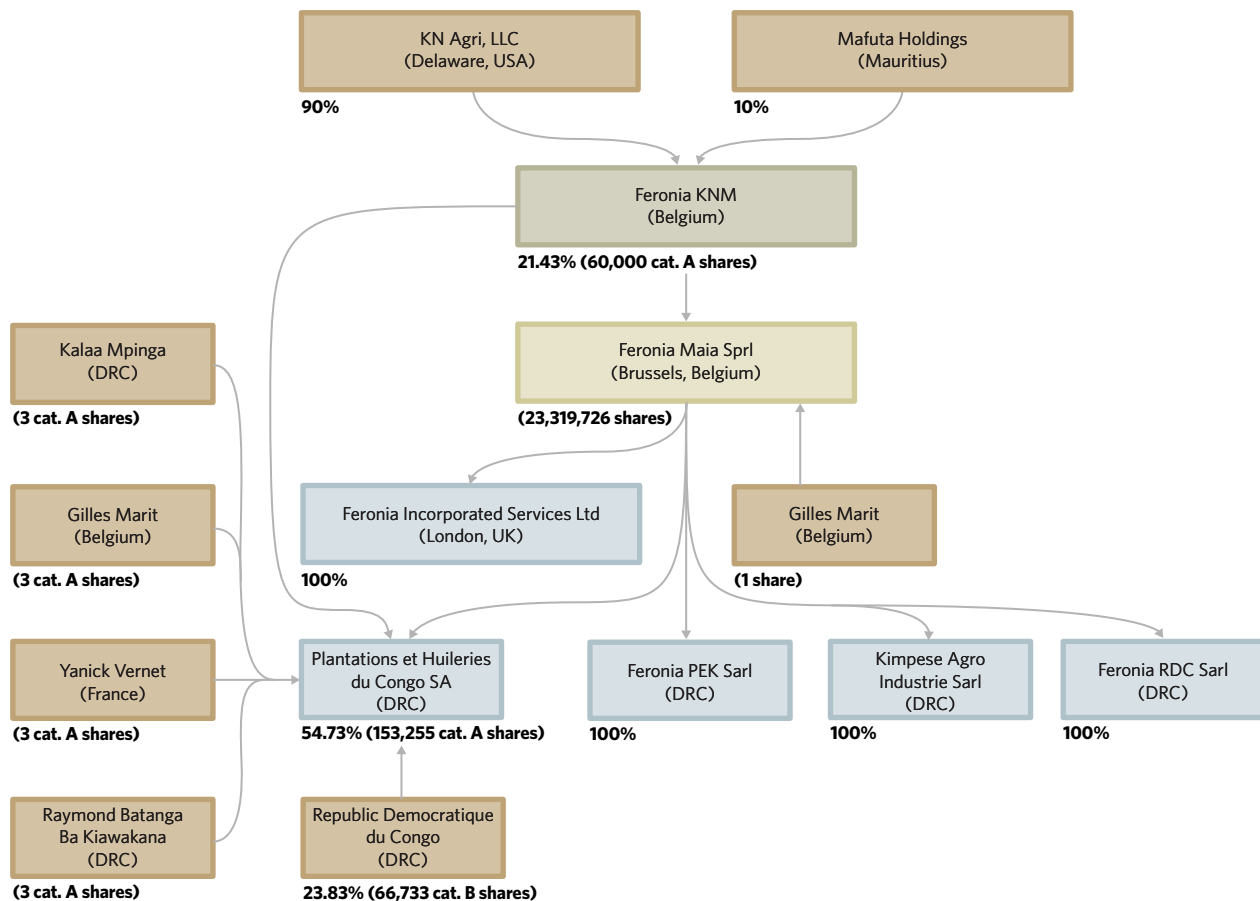
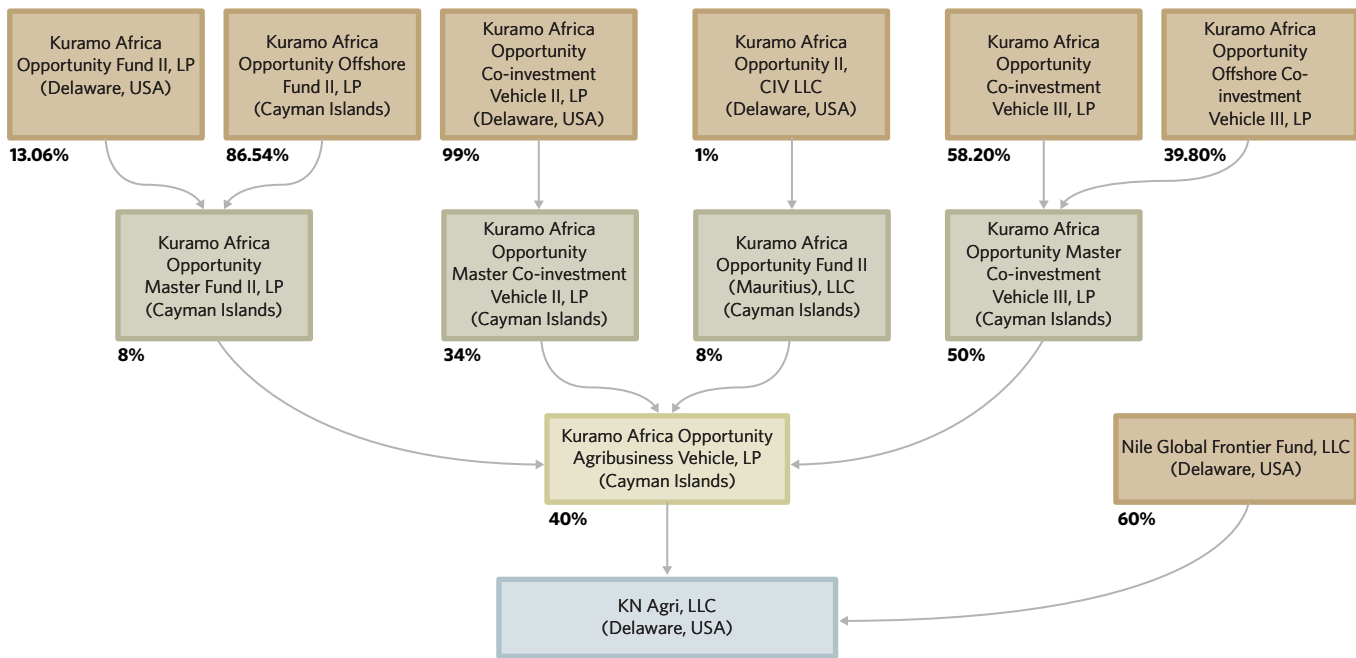


Founded by oil tycoon Jean Paul Getty, the J. Paul Getty Foundation is the world's wealthiest art institution. With a US\$6.6 billion endowment, the Getty Foundation is primarily focused on the visual arts, cultural heritage conservation, research in art history and the humanities and financing museums. In 2012, the J. Paul Getty Foundation invested in a Kuramo Fund, committing US\$3,333,413 to the Kuramo Opportunity

Fund. No other commitment has been made public in recent years. When questioned in March 2021 by the Institute regarding their investment, no response was provided.



PHC Ownership Structure as of December 2020¹¹



Endnotes

1. Réseau d'Information et d'Appui aux ONG Nationales-RDC RIAO-RDC. Maître Dominique Lumpempe Kangamina, Avocat au Barreau de la Tshopo et Activiste des Droits Humains. Septembre 2021. Available at: <https://www.oaklandinstitute.org/country/democratic-republic-congo>.
2. *Ibid.*
3. Letter from Monique Gieskes, Managing Director PHC to the Oakland Institute, January 26, 2022.
4. *Ibid.*
5. Communication with local NGO RIAO-RDC, May 14, 2021.
6. Réseau d'Information et d'Appui aux ONG Nationales- RDC RIAO-RDC. *Op. Cit.*
7. As of July 2019, see PHC Ownership structure chart at <https://www.oaklandinstitute.org/sites/oaklandinstitute.org/files/leopolds-steps-eng-corrected.pdf#page=10>
8. "Mr. Weirsum also had concerns with regards to the material omission of Mr. Seruma's professional background in connection to his three years of employment with the now infamous Madoff Securities....Mr. Seruma failed to disclose such employment history both in recruiting Mr. Weirsum as an employee as well as when soliciting potential investors of the Funds." See Seruma, Larry V. Weirsum, Marc. New York Supreme Court, Index Number: 0651754/2011. Verified Petition to Stay Arbitration, p. 41.
9. Using the British Pound to US Dollar conversion rate from January 20, 2022 of 1.36: <https://www.xe.com/currencyconverter/convert/?Amount=1&From=GBP&To=USD>.
10. Paragraph 3 of part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act of 1972 allows the Fund to publish breakdowns of asset class (bonds, property investments, private equity, etc) while keeping the specific sources of value unpublished.
11. Exhibit 01. Supreme Court of the State of New York, County of New York. NYSCEF Doc. No 17. Index No. 652494/2021. Filed April 16, 2021.

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Cover Photo: Oil palm plantation on the PHC concession

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