

## REFINERY NEIGHBOURS TO GOVT: OUR RIGHT TO WATER IS THREATENED

No doubt government's acquisition of land for an oil refinery in Kabaale parish, Buseruka sub-county, Hoima district starting in 2012 has had serious socio-economic consequences. On the one hand, we have the communities whose land was acquired and these suffered direct consequences some of which have been previously documented.

They include loss of livelihoods –government set a cut-off-date of June 2, 2012 and forbade putting up of new developments, including growing of perennial cash crops, on refinery land-, loss of access to social services such as schools – schools lost teachers when families were compensated and moved away; Nyahaira P/S remained with one teacher while Kyapaloni P/S remained with only two. Families also lost access to services such as health centres and markets.

The families above are those who either rejected compensation on grounds that it was low and are still in the refinery land or are awaiting relocation.

The families which were compensated and moved away also suffered serious socio-economic consequences. Unequipped to use large amounts of money prudently, some men bought numerous cars, married new wives and generally squandered their compensation. Some of them are back in the refinery land.

The important stories we have heard little about however is that of the effects of the refinery project on neighbours of the refinery land. Residents of Kigaga B village in Kabaale parish, Buseruka sub-county, Hoima district speak of effects such as loss of social services –some of their children use to attend the schools that collapsed-, loss of markets from refinery neighbours and even loss of companionship from friendly neighbours were compensated in the refinery project and left.\

In addition to the above, the residents are set to lose their sources of clean water as two of the spring wells from which they draw water are located in the refinery area.



***A spring well that families in the refinery area communities use. Importantly communities neighbouring the refinery land use the same well and fear they will not have access to it soon owing to the refinery project***

“We have talked to leaders like the L.C. 1 chairperson and have asked them to speak to our political leaders to find out where we will be drawing water from but they have not given us a response yet. We think this matter is urgent because we heard that the refinery land is about to be fenced off but even if it isn’t, we know that when the refinery is set up, we will not be allowed to collect water from the spring wells in the refinery,” says Robert Arinaitwe, Chairperson of the Elders Forum, Rugashari zone, Kigaga B; the forum is an authority, much like the L.C. 1s, in the zone.

Arinaitwe says that “many” families in Rugashari are set to lose access to safe water if government including the Ministry of Energy does not find them alternative sources of safe water.

“We are willing to work with government to drill boreholes or find alternative sources of water,” Andrew Tumwijukye, Fauzia Flora Atuhura and the chairperson of the Nkwaki well from which residents of Kigoma B zone draw water, jointly say; Kigoma B zone is also found in Kigaga B village.

With Uganda aspiring towards Sustainable Development Goal six, that of ensuring access to safe and clean water and with Uganda having set her own agenda of increasing access to safe water in rural areas to more than the current over 65 percent, it is important that government heeds Kigaga B communities’ cries to find them an alternative source of water. Perhaps we need to note that one of the spring wells to be affected was developed by an NGO, and not government.

\*Below are pictures of people in the above story and the effect lack of access to safe water could have on them. Other fears from the refinery project are also shown.

### **WOMEN WILL BE BURDENED TO FIND CLEAN WATER**



*Women have suffered a unique set of problems such as being abandoned because of oil activities. The refinery project is set to affect their ability to provide clean water for their families.*

### **CHILDREN COULD DROP OUT OF SCHOOL, DERAILING LOCAL CONTENT DREAMS**



*A child carrying water from the Nkwaki spring well in the refinery area. Children and their families could be forced out of school, derailing local content dreams. They could also be forced to use unsafe water if government does not provide the families with an alternative water source*

### **COMMUNITY MEMBERS CLEAN THE NKWAKI WELL**



*Arinaitwe (at the well) and the chairperson of the Nkwaki spring well (squatting, right) do maintenance work on the well*

## REFINERY NEIGHBOURS AFRAID THEY COULD LOSE ACCESS TO MARKETS



*Muhereza Mugisha, a resident of Kigaga B village, Kabaale parish, Buseruka sub-county, Hoima district, says that the refinery project led to loss of local markets. He expresses fears that because the road through which they access Lake Albert for fishing and other activities passes through the refinery, they could be cut off from the lake when the refinery is cordoned off and developed. The same road is used by trucks that buy Kigaga B farmers' produce.*

\*This report was produced in collaboration with Innocent Tumwebaze, a community observer based in Hoima district.

## AFIEGO'S PROPERTY SENSITIZATION MEETINGS SET STAGE FOR HUMANE OIL PIPELINE LAND ACQUISITION PROCESS

On February 10, 2016, over 160 community members of Rwemparaki village, Buhimba sub-county, Hoima district sit under various shades and drink in the words of Oil and Gas consultant Stainslas Birungi.

He tells them about Uganda's oil and gas resources –he says that Uganda has an estimated 6.5 billion barrels-, how these resources can be extracted and how they can be transported.

He speaks about other important matters but the subject that is closest to their heart is that of how they can ensure their property rights are respected.



***Oil and gas consultant Stainslas Birungi at the February property rights' sensitization meeting in Rwemparaki village, Buhimba sub-county. Community members keenly listen to him***

You see, late last year, government, through Newplan Consults Limited, informed members of 17 communities in Buhimba and Kizirafumbi sub-county that it intended to acquire land to transport Uganda's oil products from Hoima to Kampala. The amount of land needed was big -133 metres wide and 230km long over 17 villages- and it would be used to construct the aforementioned oil pipeline, power lines and dual carriage roads.

That news was greeted with fear!

So much fear did the news elicit that the local leadership of the two sub-counties approached AFIEGO to sensitize community members about how they can protect their land rights in the impending pipeline project.

“Our people saw what happened in the refinery project. [Over 7,000] people’s land was taken with small compensation and after wasting that small compensation, the people are back in the refinery area!

Our people are also aware that some people affected by the refinery project have not yet received compensation and those who requested for relocation [in 2012] have not yet received been relocated.

As such, they were afraid and we looked for ways to prevent them from suffering the way the refinery people suffered. We approached AFIEGO to sensitize us on our property rights and we appreciate the sensitization efforts undertaken so far,” Fenehasi Kato, the L.C.1 chairperson of Kikube village, Kizirafumbi sub-county said in early March.

When AFIEGO was approached by the leadership of Buhimba and Kizirafumbi sub-counties, –the L.C. 3 chairpersons Mr. David Atuhura and Mr. Francis Bwesige respectively approached AFIEGO- we embarked on property rights sensitization exercises where a wide range of topics including property rights as provided for by Uganda’s constitution, Land Acquisition Act and Land Act, the importance of Environment and Social Impact Assessments in ensuring successful resettlement of people and sustainable use of the environment and the importance of access to information to enable participation of affected communities in oil sector processes among others was discussed.



***Kizirafumbi L.C. 3 chairperson at AFIEGO property rights sensitization meeting in his sub-county early this year. The sub-county leadership approached AFIEGO to conduct the meetings to protect human rights.***

In addressing property rights, AFIEGO pointed out rules governing compulsory land acquisition, the right to be paid prompt, fair and adequate compensation if the acquisition is to take place, the right for those who ask for relocation to be resettled on consensus and get land for land, a house and title for the land. The right to be consulted by the District Land Board while compiling and updating compensation rights and the right to be assessed based on up to date compensation rights.

To date, AFIEGO has been able to conduct 11 property rights' sensitization meetings for members of the villages set to be affected by the Hoima-Kampala pipeline project. Over 1,200 community members have been reached and their knowledge of property rights and ways in which they can ensure that their rights are respected during the land acquisition process for the pipeline project has increased.

"I now know what my rights are. I also know that I have to be alert during the project to get my due compensation," Basara Kanyomoza of Kikube village, Kizirafumbi sub-county says.

Increased knowledge of property rights and decreased fear of the oil pipeline project isn't the only positive result that has been realized from AFIEGO's property sensitization meetings in the two sub-counties.

Following the meetings, Ministry of Energy and Newplan Consults Limited officials were pressurized into organizing four meetings, two in Buhimba sub-county and two in Kiziranfumbi sub-county, where they committed themselves to the communities that the acquisition and compensation process will be fair and every affected person will be happy.



***Jane Mugano of Newplan Consults showing uniform for Newplan workers to community members in Rweparaki village, Buhimba sub-county so that they are identifiable to communities. Looking on are other Newplan staff and an officials from Ministry of Energy. This was in March 2016. Photo by Michael Businge (AFIEGO).***

It is important to note that when Newplan Consults Limited first went to Buhimba sub-county, they did not involve local leaders in their meetings where they talked about the impending Hoima-Kampala oil pipeline project. Ministry of Energy also committed the same error.

But these have been corrected through AFIEGO's involvement with the community. This could see improved access to project information by the communities.



*Mr. George Bagonza Tinkamanyire, L.C.5 chairperson of Hoima District at the Ministry of Energy and Newplan officials to community meeting in Rwemparaki village, Buhimba sub-county on March 3, 2016. This came after AFIEGO's property sensitization meetings pressurized government to meet communities set to be affected by the Hoima-Kampala oil pipeline project. Photo by Michael Businge (AFIEGO)*

AFIEGO plans on continuing property rights sensitization meetings in the six villages we have not reached. In addition, we will also extend our work to Buseruka sub-county as requested by communities there since the two villages, Kigaaga and Kijumba, are also set to be affected by the Hoima-Kampala oil pipeline project.

**By Doris ATWIJUKIRE**

