



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Hoima & Kampala

REFINERY-AFFECTED PEOPLE REFUSE TO PARTICIPATE IN GOV'T RELOCATION CEREMONY SET FOR THIS WEEK

Over 80 refinery-affected families that were set to be relocated from the refinery area by government this Thursday August 10, 2017 have resolved that they will not be relocated until government fulfills promises it made to them in the October 2012 Resettlement Action Plan (RAP) Report for the oil refinery project.

The families, whose land was part of the over 29 sq. km that was acquired by government in 2012 for Uganda's proposed oil refinery, were set to be relocated from Kabaale-Buserruka to Kyakaboga, Hoima district at a function that was expected to be presided over by high-level officials from the Ministry of Energy, Ministry of Lands and other government agencies.

In a meeting held today August 8, 2017 at Nyahaira P/S in Hoima district, the over 80 families unanimously resolved that unless government provides them with land titles, electricity, water sources and access roads as promised in the RAP report, they will not allow to be relocated to Kyakaboga on Thursday.



The meeting was attended by Ministry of Energy officials including a representative from the Directorate of Petroleum, the sub-county leadership including the L. C. 3 chairperson, the Hoima district Community Development Officer, officers of the oil and gas police and the refinery-affected people. Pleas by Ministry of Energy officials at the meeting to reconsider the above conditions fell on deaf ears.

Government officials at the meeting: Ms. Maureen Wadiyo, Community Liaison Officer, Oil and Gas from Ministry of Energy (2nd L), Mr. Stephen Enachi who represented the Project manager, Petroleum Exploration, Directorate of Petroleum (3rd L) and the L.C. 3 Chairperson for Buseruka sub-county, Mr. Ali Tinkamanyire (Centre in yellow shirt)

The meeting, which turned riotous when the Ministry of Energy officials insisted on having a separate meeting with the refinery-affected people's leaders, was also attended by an official from Strategic Friends International (SFI), the contractor implementing the RAP report of the refinery project.

LOSS OF TRUST IN GOVERNMENT OVER BROKEN PROMISES

“The [refinery-affected] people no longer trust government and the Ministry of Energy because it has broken its promises on several occasions and has ignored the [refinery-affected] people's input into their relocation exercise.

In the RAP report, the Ministry committed that it would provide each of the persons who opted for physical relocation with land identified on a case-by-case basis in the neighbourhood of the refinery area.

The Ministry also committed that it would provide houses to each of the families and would not relocate families in a special settlement as this would lead to their isolation.

The Ministry further committed that it would conduct a livelihood restoration exercise that would involve supporting families with grants for farming and business,” Mr. Christopher Opio, the secretary to the Oil Residents Refinery Association (ORRA), says while quoting commitments made on pages viii and ix of the refinery project's 2012 RAP report.

He adds, “However, Ministry of Energy broke its promises. Only 46, out of 83 families are getting houses contrary to commitments in the RAP. In addition, land was not identified on a case-by-case basis and a special settlement, which the [refinery-affected] people have consistently rejected because it does not meet their socio-economic and cultural needs, was set up. Families are also yet to get their land titles. Without land titles, they cannot be assured that the property government wants to hand over this Thursday is theirs.”

GOV'T FAILURE TO ENABLE EFFECTIVE COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION BLAMED

Meetings in May and December 2016 with the Uganda Human Rights Commission (UHRC), Ministry of Energy and SFI respectively did not result in the refinery-affected people's requests for houses and land titles for all families, compensation by government for over 20 families still awaiting payment, a disturbance allowance of 30 percent to families facing relocation as provided for by the 1998 Land Act (as amended) and a better housing arrangement being met.

“At the May 25, 2017 meeting with the UHRC, [refinery-affected] families felt that while the UHRC had taken the initiative to address their concerns by organising the meeting with the Ministry of Energy at our request, the meeting was tipped in favour of the Ministry of Energy.

We presented our grievances and pointed out how best they could be addressed in a manner that taxpayers' money would be saved. However, at their own discretion and with little regard for our requests, the Ministry of Energy directed on how it would address our concerns. This angered the [refinery-affected] people,” Mr. Opio notes.

Some of the refinery-affected people's concerns that were not addressed included failure to buy land on a case-by-case basis, failure to provide land titles for all the families, failure to provide houses for over 47 families then that opted for physical relocation (some families dropped out of the physical relocation scheme because they were uncomfortable with the houses government plans to hand over this Thursday) and failure to compensate the over 20 families that rejected low compensation.

To date, these failures still stand but the families were willing to be relocated on condition that the bare necessities of housing for all (some female-headed and other vulnerable households are not getting houses), land titles, water, electricity and access roads as promised by government were met. These conditions are yet to be met.

“The Ministry of Energy officials said that they will process and provide the land titles in two months from Thursday, the day of resettlement. They also said that one borehole was available and that they would upgrade the access roads and extend electricity from Buseruka to Kyakaboga but the people can no longer trust them.

They refused to listen to their promises and the people turned riotous, pushing us out of the meeting, when the government officials insisted on having a separate meeting with ORRA leaders,” Mr. Opio reports.

The meeting ended with the refinery-affected people vowing that they will not participate in the handover ceremony of the houses. They also said that they would not relocate until government fulfills its promises as captured in the refinery project’s RAP report.

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