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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
MASAKA & KAMPALA**

**GOV'T SUES 80 COMMUNITY MEMBERS OVER EACOP PROJECT**

**Government wants the affected people to pay its court costs for, among others, refusing low compensation!**

The High Court in Masaka is tomorrow, September 11, 2024, expected to hear a court case that the Government of Uganda (GoU) through the Attorney General's office has filed against 80 people whose land in Lwengo, Kyotera and Rakai districts is being compulsorily acquired for the East African Crude Oil Pipeline (EACOP) project.

The people own or are beneficiaries or are administrators of 41 parcels of land that are being acquired for the EACOP project.

The project is owned by TotalEnergies E&P with 62% shares, China National Offshore Oil Corporation (CNOOC) with 8% shares as well as the Ugandan and Tanzanian governments with 15% shares each.

On behalf of the EACOP project developers, TotalEnergies superintended over efforts to acquire 2,470 acres of land from [3,660](#) households in Uganda. The households had an estimated population of [24,770](#) people at the time that the socio-economic surveys for the EACOP Resettlement Action Plan (RAP) were conducted. The EACOP project's compulsory land acquisition processes commenced in 2018 and are ongoing todate.

The land for the project is being acquired from households in ten districts in Uganda including Hoima, Kikuube, Kakumiro and Kyankwanzi. Others include Mubende, Gomba and Ssembabule. Yet others include Lwengo, Kyotera and Rakai.

It is from the latter three districts that the 80 people with the 41 parcels of land that have been sued come from. The people have been sued due to the following:

- Six (6) households with 11 land owners or estate administrators that have been sued rejected compensation on grounds that it is low;
- Ten (10) households with 18 land owners or estate administrators that have been sued are involved in land disputes and the rightful land owner cannot be determined;
- 17 households with 41 land owners or estate beneficiaries have no legally-recognised

representative;

- Two (2) households with four (4) land owners or estate administrators lack land titles;
- Five (5) are absentee land owners; and
- One (1) refused to vacate the land even after receiving compensation.

Government is seeking the following orders from court:

- To be granted leave to deposit the affected people's compensation in court;
- To be granted vacant possession of the affected people's land so that it may be used for the EACOP project activities;
- To be granted eviction and demolition orders against the affected people;
- To be discharged from any liabilities arising out of any claim and/or order arising out of the orders being sought by government; and
- To provide for costs of the case to be paid by the affected 80 land owners or estate administrators or estate beneficiaries.

Worth noting is that the people that have been sued, who include over 53 men and 26 women, are poor and vulnerable. The vulnerable ones include persons-with disabilities (PWD), the elderly and women. The people, who collectively own or use 102.449 acres of land that is needed for the EACOP, cannot afford to pay a powerful government's court costs.

Mr. Ismail Bwowe, a PWD who has been sued says, "I refused to take the compensation that the pipeline people offered for my land because it is too little. Government has sued me today and they want me to pay their court costs? Is government OK? How can a rich government and oil companies fail to pay us well and then want to take more from us? This is very unfair."

Mr. Dickens Kamugisha, the CEO of Africa Institute for Energy Governance (AFIEGO), which is providing legal support to the affected people says, "It is unfortunate that the Ugandan government and the oil companies that are working with them are using unconstitutional means to forcefully take poor people's land. Article 26 of the Constitution is clear: while it allows government to compulsorily acquire citizens' land for defined purposes, citizens are entitled to receive prompt, fair and adequate compensation in return."

He adds, "Courts should never be used as depositories for compensation rejected by citizens. Courts should adjudicate to allow citizens and government to arrive at a fair and adequate sum. If courts fail to do this and they receive compensation rejected by citizens, then courts err because they support government to take possession of citizens' land prior to citizens accepting compensation, which violates Article 26."

Ms. Aminah Acola, one of the lawyers of the affected people says, "We are deeply concerned by the government and its allies' efforts to unjustly seize land and undermine the rights of EACOP project-affected persons. We commit to ensure that those impacted by this lawsuit receive the necessary legal assistance and representation to adequately defend their rights."

Mr. Yisito Kayinga Muddu, the Coordinator of Community Transformation Foundation Network (COTFONE) that works with EACOP-affected people in Greater Masaka says, “COTFONE has walked with EACOP-affected people from the valuation stage until they were compensated. We continue to work with the people, many of whom say that they did not receive prompt, fair and adequate compensation. We are saddened that instead of paying the people the compensation that they deserve, the people have been sued.”

He adds, “We therefore call upon all stakeholders to stand in solidarity with and support the affected people, some of whom are elderly and vulnerable. We hope that justice will be served so that the people are compensated adequately and fairly. We believe that if this is done, the people will be returned to their pre-displacement level, and will replace all the land and property lost to the EACOP.”

For any further information, contact:

Ms. Diana Nabiruma, AFIEGO

[dnabiruma@afiego.org](mailto:dnabiruma@afiego.org)

OR

Head of Communications: [communication.cotfone@gmail.com](mailto:communication.cotfone@gmail.com)