

Kamuli residents riot over delayed Isimba compensation

By Tom Gwebayanga

Residents from 11 villages in Kisozi sub-county, Kamuli district, staged a demonstration last week protesting "failure" by the energy ministry to compensate them for displacement and disturbance by the Isimba Dam Hydro power project.

They marched to the Kisozi sub-county headquarters, ordered LC3 chairman, Joseph Malandi, out of office and locked it up. They also overturned furniture in the council hall and nearby offices.

The residents said some were compensated in 2015, while others were left out even when they signed forms and had been told how much they would be paid. They claimed they were to get between sh10m and sh300m.

The claimants are those whose economic activities were based on the river, including boat transporters, fishermen, sand excavators and stone quarry owners/labourers.

Fiida Nababirye, the oracle of the prominent Nababirye cultural rock, is one of the rioters. She claimed her shrine which was also a tourist site was destroyed by the contractors last week.

"We're tired of waiting. We signed the compensation forms; the property was valued but since



Workers on duty at the Isimba power construction site

then, there is no news. They must have got the money and used it," they shouted, adding: "We want our money." To prevent further havoc, the Police withdrew and allowed them to present their petition to the "shocked" LC3 chairman who they had held hostage outside his office. They said they would not relent until they are paid.

"They claim to have paid 88% of the claimants but those are lies. The payment so far is below 60%,

yet the programme winds up in April. My land was undervalued, they gave me only sh.8.5m, yet I would have got like sh200m," he said.

Moses Kyakulaga Tenywa said his boat transport business collapsed and now he has resorted to selling *Kabalagala* (pancakes).

Mode of compensation

An acre was valued at sh6m, while crops attracted different sums. Coffee on an acre was

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compensated for sh2,050,000, cassava at sh820,000, sweet potatoes at sh256,250, Irish potatoes at sh410,000 and maize at sh615,000.

Cemented graves went for sh500,000 and uncemented ones for sh300,000, while the tiled ones were sh2m.

Land owners not contented

The big land owners complained that they were cheated. Frank Mutudhu said his family was given less than sh300m for over 100 acres.

"I thought of taking the matter to court but later gave up."

He added that some people posed as landlords on his land and filled the compensation forms, and that the house was valued but not included in the final payment list.

Shadrack Mwondha, 70, who got shs260m complained that he should have got sh400m. He said he needed to find land elsewhere and also relocate the graves.

Adon Mwondha said he used to earn sh12m from sugarcane and maize per year, but was compensated with only sh60m.

Energy ministry official Martin Bidasala advised the claimants to lodge their complaints with the relevant committee instead of rioting.