

Gulu municipal demolitions leave residents in tears

GULU

By Arnest Tumwesige

More than 70 houses in Kony Pacu sub-ward in Laroo division, Gulu municipality, have been demolished to pave the way for the construction of Norah Auma road.

The demolition, which started on Monday, has left residents crying foul and accusing municipal leaders for failing to compensate them and for taking them by surprise.

Betty Lamunu, 65, a mother of nine, could not hold back her tears as she stood at a distance watching her house being demolished.

Lamunu, who sells tomatoes for a living is now stranded.

"We only heard about the demolition over the radio on Sunday. They should have given us more time," she said.

Lamunu, who has lived in Kony Pacu for 24 years, said the exercise has mainly affected the poor, who could not evacuate immediately.

Just like Lamunu, Doreen Bali, a 95-year-old widow, is also confused and homeless after her house was demolished.



Residents looking at the ruins of the demolished houses. Photo by Arnest Tumwesige

No compensation

Lucy Olanya, the area councillor, accused municipal authorities of betraying the residents by failing to compensate them.

Olanya said during a meeting convened by the town clerk in May last year, the affected people were promised compensation.

"A valuer was brought and did the work, but the affected people have never received any feedback," she added.

Olanya accused the leaders of dividing plots on the road among themselves, yet the original inhabitants should have been given first priority.

Francis Oketta, a resident, says the valuation process was done selectively, leaving out the poor people.

He said compensation must have been comprehensive to cater for all people, irrespective of the type of structures they had.

What authorities say

Moses Abonga, the division chairman, downplayed the claims from the residents, saying none of them has a land title and that they had settled in a road reserve.

Abonga said compensation is done for a building whose plan had been approved by the municipal authorities.

He said most of the affected houses did not have toilet facilities and the exercise of the demolition is in accordance with the Public

ON THE GROUND

A total of 1,100 structures were marked for demolition this year. These include kiosks, papyrus and bamboo structures, huts and weak buildings in the divisions of Laroo, Pece, Bardege and Layibi.



Health and Urban Planning Act. Pauline Lukwayi, the deputy mayor, said the issue of compensation has

never been brought to the council and challenged the affected people to table their evidence.

"Laroo division has no modern road. So our plan is to put this road in our tarmacking plan using funds from the World Bank," she added.

Lukwayi also clarified that the demolition is part of the ongoing process of razing all condemned buildings.

Court injunction

The exercise is being done despite a court injunction that bars the municipal council from demolishing any structure.

The injunction has so far been issued thrice after the complainant sought a court intervention.

MP C
toug
early
culp'

ARUA

By Robert

Lower M
tough me
deliberate
daughters
Ismail

marry of
arrested a
"Some p
to get we
future," h

Accordi
marry su
given to
parents s

Ogama
parents
commit
address
Monday

Pers
in e
will
seni

Accoi
help re
pregna

"We
identif
becaus
marria

school
and a

Gabi
Rhinc
resoly

attenc
pay fi
house

IN LOVING MEMORY

The late Pius K. Bahemuka

Mbarara head of ...