

Doho rice farmers ask for compensation

BUTALEJA

By Paul Watala

Rice farmers affected by the construction of Doho Irrigation Scheme in Butaleja district have not been compensated.

The revelation was made by Butaleja District Woman Member of Parliament Milly Mugeni while addressing a meeting attended by the parliamentary committee on natural resources, water ministry officials, district leaders, contractors and rice farmers in Himutu sub-county.

The officials were in Butaleja to monitor government programmes.

"The construction started last year, but compensation has not been done," Mugeni said.

The meeting got tensed up when legislators asked to know how farmers acquired land titles in wetlands

"We convinced farmers to allow construction as compensation was being arranged, but the Government is taking long. The farmers now think we connived with the Government to grab their land," the MP said.

Funding

The scheme, which is funded by African Development Bank in partnership with the Government, is being constructed by Dott Services.

Mugeni said the farmers have been

depending on growing rice for food and money to meet expenses like medical bills and school fees.

"Those that gave away land can no longer afford to meet such basic necessities," she said.

During the meeting, Butaleja resident district commissioner Richard Gulume and Mugeni clashed with the MPs after they attempted to inquire how the farmers got land titles in wetlands.

"We spent sleepless nights

convincing the farmers to surrender their land and allow construction. Do not awaken that now," Gulume said.

Inherited land

Mugeni said rice farmers inherited the land from their grandfathers and that if MPs wanted to know how they acquired the land titles, they should ask the lands ministry.

"We lost lives, a Police post was burnt down and some of the leaders could not sleep in their houses because farmers were hunting for anybody in support of the irrigation project. We stood firm and told the farmers about benefits of the facility," Mugeni said.

"The farmers are not responsible for issuing land titles. Such questions should be directed to the relevant authorities," she said.

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