



A water ministry official speaking to rice farmers. Photo by Paul Watala

Rice farmers welcome sh22b Doho scheme

BUTALEJA

By Paul Watala

A section of land owners and rice farmers that have been resisting the construction of the Doho two irrigation scheme valued at over sh22b at Himutu sub-county, Butaleja district have been sensitised about the importance of the facility. They were also asked to pave way for the construction to take off.

The sensitisation was conducted on Thursday by officials from the water ministry at Kangalaba Primary School in Himutu.

The sensitisation comes after a security meeting of rice farmers, security officials and local leaders, where farmers appealed to the Government to sensitise them on the benefits of the scheme before they could make way for the construction of the facility.

Rice farmers and area Members of Parliament in Butaleja district have been divided over the building of the facility, as others believed it was a move to grab their land.

Butaleja Woman MP, Milly Mugeni is among the leaders who people accused of being against the construction of the facility.

A section of rice farmers, who are opposed to the construction of the facility, recently attacked a Police post in Kangalaba after the Police refused to release some of their colleagues who recently staged a demonstration against the facility being set up on their land.

The security meeting was convened on the orders

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of security minister Henry Tumukunde, where all MPs attended and agreed to mobilise rice farmers to be sensitised.

However, of the three MPs who attended the previous security meeting, only Bunyole MP Moses Nagwomu attended the meeting that was meant for sensitising rice farmers.

Paul Nuwagira, the head of sustainable management irrigation scheme component, while conducting the sensitisation, appealed to the rice farmers to embrace the project, saying it is aimed at increasing production and improving income in their households.

"Why should you reject a sh30b project aimed at eradicating the poverty in your houses? This is the first big government project in your district," Nuwagira said.

Nuwagira assured the farmers that the Government has got no intention of grabbing land.

Nuwagira said nobody would be chased away from the swamp

at the time of construction, adding that farmers will be allowed to go on with their work in the fields as usual.

"The project will take two years and the construction plan will be given to the rice farmers. We shall also be able to compensate all farmers whose crops will be destroyed during the construction," Nuwagira said.

He also allayed fears that had been raised by farmers that in case they fail to manage the scheme, the Government would take it away from them.

"The Government is not here to manage your scheme, but you will have to elect leaders within rice farmers to manage the facility," Nuwagira said.

Moses Nagwomu appealed to the farmers to protect the machinery and also co-operate by guiding the surveyors during the exercise.

He warned rice farmers against politicians who spread harmful propaganda, adding that such leaders are enemies of Butaleja.

Daniel Mutaki, while speaking on behalf of the rice farmers, welcomed the project and also advised the Government to always sensitise residents before rolling out a project rather than forcing them to embrace it.

"We have been resisting the project because we were ignorant as to how the project runs and its benefit to rice farmers," Mutaki said.

"At least now I know that I will be able to cultivate twice in one season because there will be constant water supply," Mutaki said.