

Compensation to delay Karuma power project

Pending. Unresolved land issues have slowed down construction works on the transmission routes.

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KIRYANDONGO. Difficulties in acquiring land for the Karuma interconnection project is likely to delay the commissioning of the 600MW hydropower plant, the Uganda Electricity Generation Company Ltd chief executive officer, Mr Harrison Mutikanga, has said.

The power plant, whose construction commenced in August 2013, is expected to be commissioned in December 2018.

Mr Mutikanga said despite the progress of ongoing works at Karuma Hydropower project hitting 71 per cent, commissioning it on schedule remains uncertain due to land-related issues where transmission lines will cross.

Electricity from the power plant is expected to be evacuated through Karuma-Kawanda (305km), Karuma-Olwiyo (60km) and Karuma-

Lira (80km). More than 4,000 affected people on the transmission routes will be compensated.

Mr Mutikanga said they are working closely with the ministry of Energy, Finance ministry and Uganda Electricity Transmission Co Ltd (UETCL) to ensure that the problems are rectified and the project is commissioned on schedule.

Mr Mutikanga, who was accompanied by other UEGCL board officials, was addressing the media on the project progress at Karuma on Wednesday during a site visit.

Shs30b

Compensation. Amount that has been spent so far out of the total Shs56b.

Mr Edward Mutesa, the principal project officer- social Aspect at UETCL, the firm undertaking the interconnection project, told *Daily Monitor* in an interview on Thursday that they are already behind

schedule by six months due to emerging land disputes.

He noted that the biggest challenges have been experienced on the Karuma-Kawanda, the longest route where they encountered several overlapping titles by landowners between the Nakasongola and Wakiso districts.

According to Mr Mutesa, owners of land on the Karuma-Lira route are being influenced by lawyers to get more money.

He said out of the 4,135 people affected by the interconnection project, 2,791 have so far been compensated Shs30b of the Shs56b meant to compensate all the affected land owners.

Mr Albert Byaruhanga, the Karuma Hydropower project manager, noted concerns on the dam section and its power intake as well as underground caverns and tunnels.

"This project is designed to serve more than 50 years, in the long run, we worry that it can create a lot more problems in future during the operation of the plant if quality control is not maintained," Mr Byaruhanga said.



Progress. The power house at Karuma Hydro Power plant under construction. PHOTO BY TOBBIAS JOLLY OWINY