

Give local firms a chance at road contracts – Bunyoro MPs

HOIMA

By Robert Atuhairwe

Members of Parliament and local leaders in the oil-rich Albertine region want the Government to give preference to local firms when awarding contracts to build the 10 oil roads in Bunyoro sub-region.

They also want people who lose land and property to the road projects to be given fair compensation.

They were responding to a presentation by Racheal Ngozebwa, the Uganda National Roads Authority (UNRA) manager for the western region, on the forthcoming road projects in the area.

This was during a stakeholder's engagement on Thursday at Mikah Eco Resort Hotel in Hoima town.

Ngozebwa said the 10 roads are Buliisa-Para, Masindi-Biiso, Buliisa-Park Junction, Biiso-Butiaba-Wanseko, Hoima-Butiaba and Kiziranfumbi-Kabaale.

Others include Katasiha-Kaseta-Rwera via Bugoma forest, Kabwoya-Kituti, Buhimba-Nalweyo-Kakumiro and Karugutu-Ntoroko.

State minister for public



Karubanga and Otim during a stakeholders meeting at Mikah Eco Resort Hotel in Hoima town on Thursday. Photo by Robert Atuhairwe

service, who is also the Kigorobya constituency legislator, David Karubanga, said local firms are being overlooked even when it comes to small contracts, in favour of foreign firms.

He said local content should be emphasised in the road projects if the projects are to create bigger economic and social benefits for the country.

Masindi Woman MP Jalia Bintu urged UNRA to engage

local councils and leaders at the grassroots to authenticate ownership of land in the project-affected areas, to avoid compensating 'ghosts'.

She described an incident where two people in the same area with the same sizes of land to be appropriated for the road project were paid different amounts of money.

Hoima Municipality MP Dr. Lawrence Bategeka accused UNRA of listening more

to the donors, adding that donors have reached the extent of doing feasibility studies as if local universities do not train engineers.

He urged the Government to always ring-fence funds for compensation so that people get adequate, timely and fair compensation as it is enshrined in the law.

Buhaguzi County MP Dan Muhairwe urged the Government to rethink

services delivered to our people. With time, the situation will improve."

its decree that prohibits compensation of people who do not have national identity cards.

The leaders also want UNRA to compel contractors to have a component of climate change in road construction, such as planting trees along the paved roads.

They said many trees are cut down during construction, but they are not replanted.

Masindi district chairperson Cosmas Byaruhanga emphasised that the Government should ensure road construction materials are procured by the local people.

Ngozebwa said the roads will be constructed to enable commercial oil production by 2020.

The director for road maintenance at UNRA, Joseph Otim, said UNRA staff are currently undertaking feasibility studies and preliminary designs of the over 580km of the 10 oil roads.

On the local content, he added that the revised Public Procurement and Disposal of Public Assets (PPDA) policy, dictates that 30% of any major works of any contract and worth sh30b and below must be done by a local contractor.