

Some of the people who encroached on Kangombe Forest Reserve attending a High Court session at Bujogoro Primary School in Kibaale district. Residents were forced to vacate the land. Photo by Ismael Kasooha

Public warned against buying forest reserve land

KIBAALE

By Ismael Kasooha

National Forestry Authority (NFA) has warned developers and members of the public to desist from acquiring pieces of land and land titles in gazetted forest reserves in the districts of Kagadi, Kibaale and Kakumiro.

"Anyone buying land in forest reserves will be regarded as a forest encroacher and will be arrested and prosecuted for illegally settling in gazetted forest reserves," warned Boaz Basigirenda, the NFA sector manager for Kagadi.

According to NFA, all the protected forests have been encroached on, though the encroachers recently vacated voluntarily while others were forced out of the forest reserves.

The Government through the NFA now wants to hire out all the forest reserves to individuals and companies to venture into commercial tree basis to restore the lost forest cover.

BETWEEN THE LINES:

Residents living around Kijuna Central Forest Reserve in Kibaale have asked NFA to distribute the forest land equally to those who applied to plant trees in order to restore the forest cover.

During the sensitisation meetings conducted in Kagadi and Kibaale districts, NFA officials discovered that some people had illegally acquired pieces of land in Kanaga, Ruzaire, Kijuna, Nyabiku and Kangombe forest reserves and established gardens claiming that they were okayed by the leadership of Kibaale district.

However, residents living around the forest reserves in Kibaale are still unsatisfied with the process that was followed in

"We are worried given the trend in the country that the forest reserves will be given out to the well-to-do people and those well-placed in government at our expense," said Jogo Mugisa, a representative of the tree farmers in Kibaale.

However, Basigirenda called on the residents to stop panicking because NFA will accommodate their demands.

Residents living around Kijuna Central Forest Reserve in Kibaale have asked NFA to distribute the forest land equally among those who applied to plant trees in order to restore the forest cover.

They said the giveaway of the forest reserve land, if not well managed, can ignite conflict between the local people and those who will have been given the leases.

Basigirenda called for maximum co-operation during the exercise to allocate land to individuals to venture into

Kagadi sector has a total of 16 forest reserves, which include Kagombe, the biggest measuring 11,331 hectares, Kagadi-eight hectares, Nyakarongo-3,535 hectares, Muhunga-399 hectares in Kyebando sub-county, Nyabigoye 495 hectares in Matale sub-county, Gurama-1,546 hectares in Nkooko sub-county and Kihaimira-572 hectares in Kasambya sub-county.

Others are Nakuyazo 342 hectares in Kasambya sub- county, Kijuna 1,225 hectares in Kyebando sub-county, Ruzaire-1,160 hectares in Kiryanga sub-county, Kanaga-650 hectares in Nyamarunda sub county, Rukara 456 hectares in Kyebando sub county, Nyabiku 355 hectares in Kyebando, Kasato with 2,691 hectares in Kiryanga and Kakindo sub-counties, Kyamurangi 417 hectares in Kiryanga sub county, Rwengeye-329 hectares in Kiryanga and Pacwa sub

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