



Residents reject World Bank water project

KAPCHORWA

By Paul Watata

Angry residents in Sipi sub-county, Kapchorwa district have protested a move by the Ministry of Water to construct Bukedea gravity flow scheme at the source of Sipi Falls.

Residents used bowlders to prevent officials from the area, ministry and Police from attending the sub-county stakeholders meeting in Sipi.

The youth were later convinced by their leaders to remove the rocks and pave way for leaders to proceed to the venue.

On reaching the venue, residents started booing the leaders as they attempted to introduce the topic of the quality flow scheme forcing the Police to arrest one of the residents.

The residents become rowdy, demanding the release of their colleague.

Heavily armed Police were deployed at the venue and some of the angry residents refused to return for the meeting despite efforts from Police and other leaders.

Gravity flow scheme

The construction of Bukedea upper gravity flow scheme to pump water using upper Sipi River is in its initial stage but residents have expressed fear that the river could dry up.

They instead advised the Government to draw water from the lower part of the river at Kagolo and not Chepriet.

"We as elders and residents of Sipi and Kaseremu sub-counties are calling on the funders to change the design and draw water from the lower part. We are not refusing to give water to our brothers and sisters in Bukedea district but it is our mandate to protect our God given natural resource," Alex Satya, a resident of Sipi, said.

Lazarus Chebyanga, an opinion leader in Sebei, also rejected the move and blamed Ministry of Water officials for not engaging the local communities.

He said destroying the source of River Sipi will affect the water falls, affect the



A Police officer restrains a resident protesting against the gravity flow scheme. Photo by Paul Watata

tourism industry, reduce water for farming and lead to job scarcity for the youth.

"We are hundreds of youth who earn a living through guiding tourists that visit Sipi River so, we cannot allow or support the move," he said.

"Our advice is that the engineers need to go back to the drawing board and change the design," Chebyanga said.

Appeal

Cherus Mukony appealed to all Ugandans to joining the Sabin in resisting the move, adding that Sipi is one of the things that have sold Uganda positively on the international scene and bring billions of dollars.

Kapchorwa water, engineer David Olal and other district leaders attempts to explain matters to the locals fell on deaf ears.

Olal said Bukedea upper scheme was designed to provide water to Kaseremu and Sipi and part of Kween district with clean water, adding that the water which is supposed to be pumped to Bukedea district will be gotten from lower part of

River Sipi.

"The study was done and it was discovered the water at the lower part of Sipi was not enough to supply the entire two sub-counties in Kapchorwa and Bukedea district. That is why we advised the Government to separate the sources," Olal said.

"We only want to use about 13% of the water at the source and 77% of the water will remain for tourism and farming. ConAfrika Consult advised the Government that the amount of water drawn from the source of the falls cannot cause it to dry up," he said.

Kapchorwa resident district commissioner Jane Frances Kuka condemned the act of using rudimentary ways to oppose the scheme, adding that demonstrating is not the way but that they should use the right channels to address their matters.

"We should not mix development with politics. Our people need water and so do our neighbours. We should not deny them the right to clean water. They are Ugandans too," Kuka said.