

Boy seeks sh7b from Umeme over injuries

By Barbra Kabahumuza

Seven-year-old Angello Sserubiri, whose left arm was amputated after he was allegedly hit and injured by a live power line, is demanding from power distributor Umeme Limited sh7.4b in compensation.

The case was filed through Joel Olweny & Company Advocates at the civil division of the High Court in Kampala. A court-driven mediation to settle the case amicably is scheduled for December 11.

Sserubiri, who sued through a next of kin, Mike Katende, contends that on May 6, while at his parents' home at Kasenge ward, Kyengera town council in Wakiso district, was shocked by power from Umeme's fallen transmission wires that hang off an electric pole.

Court documents

The court documents show that Umeme had earlier been notified of the loose hanging wires, but declined to heed calls to replace the rotten pole.

Sserubiri says he experienced a sudden wave of electrocution that saw him being flanged into the air several times and subsequently having his head hit on the ground.

The minor asserts that he was rushed to Rubaga Hospital, where he received treatment for weeks.

Katende notified the company about Sserubiri's worsening condition. He says: "Umeme officials arrogantly told him to wait and never responded."

Katende says worse still, the left arm that was amputated because of the injuries, was Sserubiri's dominant arm,

which he had learnt to use to write, eat, accomplish house chores.

He says in July, Sserubiri was admitted at International Hospital Kampala, diagnosed with a post-burn scalp defect and underwent a scalp flap rotation. He attended to a plastic surgeon for a follow-up on July 11 and he continues to do so.

Sserubiri says he has lost all hope of earning a livelihood as a result of permanent incapacity occasioned to him at a tender age.

Medical documents filed at court show that the amputation and loss of his dominant arm has further inhibited his rights to education.

Sserubiri claims Umeme duped his father to sign the purported acknowledgment of receipt of funds, well knowing that he is illiterate and the purported guarantee was neither translated nor read back to him in the Luganda that he understands.

Compensation details

Sserubiri also seeks compensation of \$400,000 (about sh1.4b) for general damages and sh6b in special, exemplary and punitive damages with interest of 25% per annum from May 6, 2016.

Umeme defence

Umeme has denied claims that it was notified about the electric pole. Umeme states that it carries out regular maintenance and checks to ensure that all its electric poles are in good working conditions. It asserts that having properly maintained the electric pole, it did not negligently cause the injuries allegedly sustained by Sserubiri.

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