



SANDRA ATUSINGUZA > OIL RESOURCE

## Oil host communities not benefiting from government programmes

In February 2016, Prime Minister Ruhakana Rugunda at the Media Centre in Kampala launched a Shs53b Uganda Women's Entrepreneurship Programme (UWEP) under the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development.

The was aimed to support women through provision of interest-free credit and technical advice on, among others, value addition and technical advice, for purposes of making women major actors in the micro, small and medium scale enterprises sub-sector

In his Budget speech on June 8, 2016, Finance minister Matia Kasajja announced that a provision of Shs43b had been made to cater for several activities aimed at fighting poverty among women in Uganda. Mr Kasajja's announcement was a follow up of a promise that President Museveni made during the 2015 Women's Day celebrations in Kabale. The President said that his government would support the economic emancipation of women by setting up a special fund to cater for women-led business projects.

The funding available, which is meant to help women groups, comprised of members within the age brackets of 18-65 years in micro, small and medium scale enterprises sub-sector, women's entrepreneurship skills and address unemployment and poverty, has not had impact in oil host communities and women have not benefited at all from the initiative.

After government acquired 29sqkm of land in Kabaale parish for the refinery project, it is indicated in the projects' resettlement action plan report that a total of 3514 women were affected. These project affected persons had

a 60.5 per cent social networks memberships of which 52 per cent of the same were women in different farmer groups, self-help, business groups, registered community-based groups, and social clubs. Despite the existing structures at the sub-county level, the office of the community development officer Buseruka Sub-county, did not oversee or recommends them as some had left after compensation and others lacked detailed information.

Besides, the Youth Livelihood Programme (YLP) targeting the poor and unemployed youth in all the districts in the country being implemented under the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development, with a budget running for five years, has also been of no benefit to the youth who were affected by the developments in oil host communities.

The community demand-driven Programme to the Youth Interest Groups in form of a revolving fund, has had no significance to the youth as the terms and conditions to qualify to access the funds were ambiguous for them since they were not organised in groups, lacked skills and knowledge to start up any enterprise.

Even if they had shown demand, the cut-off date for the project June 2, 2012 did not favour them to do any developments or project on the land as proposed by government. Further, many prolonged dates set for relocation have negatively affected the youth thus lived in fear of acquiring the funds yet the money is supposed to be reimbursed so that other youth can also benefit.

Recently, the government embarked on an exercise conducted by NIRA targeting students and pupils, the Ministry of Education

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and Sports, and other stakeholders of registering school going children. According to Gilbert Kadilo, the NIRA head of communications, the registration, among others things, was aimed at having a national register with

each and every citizen's data and mandated by NIRA's Registration of Persons Act.

The registration will run for a period of three months during term two, which begins on May 29 to August 31, targeting about 10 million children in all government and private schools across the country. After registration, each child will get a National Identification Number (NIN) that will be the same number, which they will carry for life and also use this number to apply for National IDs when they are 16 years old and above.

Unfortunately, the refinery affected pupils did not benefit from this programme as well. When land was acquired for the same project, four schools were affected - two private and two government schools respectively, Bukona Nursery and Primary School, Relieve Nursery and Primary School and Nyahaira Primary School and Kyapaloni primary school which hosted a total of 926 pupils.

Since then, the future of these pupils was ruined as many of them dropped out of school while others got married at an early age and are now young fathers and mothers since schools were closed to pave way for the oil development.

Some of the refinery affected women have not benefited from government programmes in a classroom at Nyahaira Primary School, which was closed because of the refinery project in Kabaale parish - Hoima District.

As more oil development projects are kicking off in different districts in Bunyoro, the same plight experienced in oil host communities if not checked will also spread to other communities as well.

Prompt measures need to be adopted so that the communities are given always priorities benefit from these government programs, have good standard of living and are alleviated from poverty.

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