

## Residents protest over radioactive storage facility

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**MUKONO.** Residents of Canaan estate in Kituba Village, Nama Sub-county in Mukono District have protested a government plan to construct a centralised storage facility for radioactive sources in the area.

They argue that the construction of the facility in the area will expose them to radioactive materials harmful to human health and degrade the environment of the area where 1,000 people reside.

Radioactive sources are used in medicine, industry, agriculture, research and teaching. They are also used in some military applications.

During a meeting organised by officials from Uganda Atomic Energy Council (UAEC) at St. Andrew Kaggwa Kichwa Primary School early this week, residents asked government to relocate the project to another place far from residential areas.

**“We want development, but not of such a nature. This is an estate which was planned for residential houses, not an industrial area.”**

**NATHAN MAGANDA, RESIDENT**

In addition to the radioactive storage facility, UAEC also plans to set up staff quarters and the council headquarters in the area.

Mr John Jagwa, a teacher at Mpoma Secondary School, said they are worried that if the facility is constructed in the area, they will be at a high risk of contracting diseases such as cancer.

Mr Mary Nagawa, the chairperson of Kituba Village, said if government cannot take the facility to another place, it should instead compensate residents so that they can relocate to other areas.

“If they insist on establishing the facility here, we shall take them to court,” Nagawa said.

However, Ms Ruth Asaba, a UAEC official, allayed residents' fears, saying the facility will cause no harm to them.

She said the facility will be constructed to ensure that people are protected from harmful substances.

“We are not stupid to set up a facility that will endanger lives. We are experts in radiology, radiation and we know what we are doing,” she said.

“We are supervised by other international agencies like International Atomic Energy Agency, which cannot allow the council to build a dangerous facility in the middle of a residential area,” Ms Asaba said.

She said the council purchased more than 11 acres of land in the area seven years ago before majority of the residents settled there.