

MASESE PRIMARY SCHOOL COMPLAINED OF MASSIVE IRREGULARITIES BY THE MUNICIPAL SURVEYORS

JINJA

By Charles Kakamwa

The commission of inquiry into land has ordered Jinja municipal council to produce, within a week, a report on the anomalies committed during a demarcation exercise on land owned by the Church of Uganda.

The directive was made by Frederick Ruhindi, one of the commissioners, on Friday after authorities of Masese Co Education Primary School in Walukuba/Masese division, Jinja complained of irregularities by the municipality lands officials.

Ruhindi last week led a team on a visit to various properties affected by land grabbing in the town.

It was a follow-up of their activities after the initial visit in June, when the commission headed by Justice Catherine Bamugemereire conducted public hearings on land matters in Jinja.

Teachers were particularly concerned about the future of the school after a survey and demarcation exercise, by the municipality in August, which indicated that some classrooms, library, staff quarters, a latrine and part of the playground were outside the school.

The school headmistress, Christine Babirye, said though she had earlier asked for opening of the school

Land grabbers threaten existence of Jinja school



Robert Kitimbo (left), Christine Babirye (middle), Frederick Ruhindi (second-right) and Ebert Byenkya at Masese Co Education Primary School. Photo by Charles Kakamwa

boundaries to avert land grabbing, when the surveyors went for the exercise, they were never notified while mark-stones were planted at night.

"Once, parents called me at 3.00am to come and witness people planting mark stones on the school land. Whenever we try to intervene, we are threatened," she said.

Babirye said she was told to concentrate on her teaching job

and leave the land matters.

Asked by the commission lead counsel, Ebert Byenkya, why he never involved the school in the demarcation, the municipal land surveyor, Robert Kitimbo, said during the exercise, he saw two teachers and thought they were representing the school.

"It means some people might come and evict the school," Byenkya said upon revelation that some people have freehold

titles on the school land.

Ruhindi expressed dismay over irregularities on land in Jinja warning that no stone would be left unturned in pursuit of justice.

"Jinja must shape up, we have had enough. It (dubious land deals) is a cartel within the town, involving politicians, and technical staff," a visibly angry Ruhindi said. He promised to send a team of surveyors from

its structures. In addition, the mining has created deep ditches that expose the 700 pupils and teachers to danger.

Ruhindi observed that murram mining is being done by perpetrators of the illegalities to reach the top of the hill and have the school removed.

Masese Hill, where the school is located served as the headquarters of the Church of Uganda in Busoga before it was shifted to Bugembe Hill in Jinja.

The commission also visited Katende East village in Bugembe town council, where Busoga kingdom is claiming ownership of a piece of land occupied by the Police barracks.

They also visited Busoga Diocese land in Bugembe, part of which is being claimed by the kingdom.

The land on Bugembe Hill accommodating Busoga Diocese headquarters measures 78.8 acres, according to Bishop Paul Naimanhye. Of this, the church has a freehold title for 50 acres while it applied for one for the remaining 27.8 acres at the district land board before the kingdom came up to claim its ownership.

Naimanhye said the land was donated to the church by former Kyabazinga Ezekiel Tenywa Waako, father of the former Kyabazinga Henry Wako Muloki, who died in 2008.

"We have been occupying this land for over 45 years, but unfortunately individuals now want to parcel it out and sell it off," he said.

Opened in 1927, Masese Co Primary School was one of the first primary schools to be built in Jinja. Its alumni include

- President Apollo Milton Obote
- Former minister Henry Kyemba
- David Kamusaala, ex Jinja Municipality MP.

**ALUMNI OF
MASESE CO
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Kampala to help rectify the anomalies.

However, the town clerk, Francis Byabagambi, promised that a re-planning exercise would be done, during which boundaries of the school would be expanded to include all its properties.

He argued that part of the problem is that most government entities undertake development projects without opening their boundaries.

The school is also threatened by miners excavating murram from the hill on which it sits, an activity likely to weaken