

Residents block power line project over compensation

Adamant. Residents say they will not vacate their land until they are given adequate compensation.

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NTUNGAMO. Residents of Kafunjo-Mirama and Kitwe town councils have blocked workers of Uganda Electricity Transmission Company Limited (UETCL) from erecting power transmission equipment in the area, claiming they have not been duly compensated for their destroyed property.

UETCL workers escorted by at least 15 police officers on Tuesday turned up near Omuki-gando Trading Centre in Kafunjo Mirama Town Council and started fixing wires on metallic poles but the residents confronted them and pelted them with stones.

They fled the area in their vehicles. The residents claim they were not given appropriate compensation for their land, crops, houses and other property.

The project started four years ago.

Residents petition President

Last year, they petitioned the President over the matter. He, however, referred it to the Ntungamo Resident District Commissioner, Ms Justine Mbabazi. The petitioners claim she has not done much about it. They say they never allow the line to pass through their land and will go to court if leaders fail to address the matter.

The vice chairperson of Murambi Ward in Kafunjo-Mirama Town Council, Mr Benon Kamurasi, said it was wrong for the UETCL workers to go to the area with policemen, claiming



Unhappy. A woman and man near their house below a transmission pole in Ntungamo District. Several residents have refused to vacate their land to pave way for construction of an electricity line. They are demanding compensation. PHOTO BY PEREZ RUMANZI

that they intended to threaten the locals on their land.

"We have been negotiating and we did not expect them to come with police and teargas to threaten us. They want to take our land without compensating us? The RDC, the President and UETCL workers know that we are aggrieved. Our property was undervalued and more has been damaged," said Mr Kamurasi.

The power line goes to Rwanda, Burundi and the Democratic Republic of Congo.

Mr Polly Tinabo, a resident, said they can relocate to other places to pave way for the power project if they are given due compensation.

"They promised to relocate us and build for us houses, but they

have not given us money equivalent to property destroyed. We can't allow works to go on. We don't have what to eat. All the land has been taken away," said Mr Tinabo.

"We have been negotiating and we did not expect them to come with police and teargas to threaten us. They want to take our land without compensating us?,"

BENON KAMURASI, VICE CHAIRPERSON OF MURAMBI WARD

Mr James Habineza, the Kafunjo Mirama Town Council chairperson, said the residents need to be given appropriate compensation to resettle other than being forced to leave their land when they have nowhere to go.

Ms Mbabazi said the district

security officials never mentioned deployment of police force the residents to sue. She added that they were to find solutions to the issue.

Ms Mbabazi, however, accused the residents of derailing the project. The aggrieved people are from the villages of Kara, Kigando, Mirama, Fobogo, Rwentondo, Rwenzori and Karo Karungi.

Government is pushing the law to enable it to acquire land for development projects.

The President, who has on several occasions argued that the people block projects for years demanding for unfair compensations.