



**Idle.** Agriculture minister Vincent Ssempiija (second left) on a recent tour of one of the fish handling facilities in Nakasongola District, which has been turned into a meeting place. PHOTO BY DAN WANDERA

# Leaders task govt over idle fisheries projects

**Concern.** Leaders claim the contractors failed to complete works on the sites.

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**NAKASONGOLA.** Leaders of 14 districts in the Lake Kyoga basin have asked government to explain why the fish handling facilities established at the different landing sites on the lake are lying idle.

Under the Lake Kyoga Integrated Management Organisation (Lakimo), the leaders, in their November 2 petition, claim the contractors failed to complete the works on the sites, rendering the facilities a waste of resources.

"The modern fish handling facilities established under the World Bank and African Development Bank project are white elephants at the respective landing sites because they serve no purpose," the petition reads in part.

Mr Samuel Kigula, the Lakimo chairperson, in an interview at the weekend, said under the project, the contractors were supposed to

erect modern fish handling facilities that included an ice block processing plant, fish handling slabs, a safe water supply system and waterborne sanitary facilities, but that none of these was done.

"We are also calling for a streamlined fisheries intervention in handling the illegal fishing activities. The fisheries protection unit has not spread to the other parts of the lake," said Mr Kigula, who is also the Nakasongola District chairperson.

The leaders also claim that the disbandment of the beach management units in

2015 left a big power vacuum at landing sites.

"The temporarily management structures are not sustainable at the landing sites where illegal fishing gear, including silting of the lake by use of sand and tree branches, threatens the lake resource," the petition adds.

## Govt responds

However, Agriculture minister Vincent Ssempiija said government is doing everything possible to save Lake Kyoga from destruction.

"We are working out a plan to have the lake restocked because the fish handling facilities will need a big stock for the market. I have visited some of the facilities and I am equally concerned about their idle status," he said.

The acting commissioner for fisheries in the ministry of Agriculture, Mr Edward Rukuunya, added that government has earmarked funds in the upcoming budget for the completion of the fish handling facilities. He declined to mention the exact amount.

## AFFECTED DISTRICTS

**Petitioners.** The districts, which subscribe to Lakimo include Nakasongola, Pallisa, Amolatar, Kamuli, Apac and Dokolo. Others are Buyende, Kaliro, Soroti, Kaberamaido, Serere, Katakwi, Ngora and Kumi.