

Kibaale locals demand priority in forest giveaways

KIBAALE

By Ismael Kasooha

Leaders in Kibaale are opposed to the plans by the National Forestry Authority (NFA) to lease forest reserves in the area to people who are non-residents of the district.

"If the forest reserves are leased to people who are non-residents, it could cause disharmony, the LC5 chairperson, said.

Amara said the process of applying for the land is tedious. The applications have to be picked from NFA headquarters in Kampala, filled and returned to the same office, which is laborious for the residents.

Also required is a bank statement that shows that one has at least sh5m for them to be considered for a lease.

Louis Balikudembe, the Kibaale district senior natural resources officer, said four forests have been earmarked for commercial forestry

leasing. They are Nyabiku, Ruzaire, Kanaga and Kijuna forest reserves.

Under this arrangement, NFA will lease out for 49 years forest land that was degraded for replanting and the trees will belong to the individual persons or companies.

Juliet Mubi, the acting public relations officer and communications manager NFA said the project is a national programme and they are following the Public Procurement and Disposal of Public Assets Act (PPDA) regulations.

"Restricting other people from participating would be against the law," Mubi said.

She added that NFA will look into all views and make a decision. Mubi, however, said that the local people are already catered for through the collaborative forest management (CFM) arrangement, which is provided for in the forest and Tree Planting Act of 2003.

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