

Locals resist relocation over inadequate compensation

Justification. The residents claim the Shs500,000 compensation being offered by China State Construction Company Limited is too little to resettle them.

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MANAFWA. More than 500 families affected by a stone quarry in Sibanga Sub-county, Manafwa District, have refused to be relocated, claiming the compensation being offered for their land and property is inadequate.

The affected residents live within the radius of 500 metres of the quarry where a Chinese company is excavating gravel for the construction of the Mbale-Lwakhakha Road.

However, they claim the Shs500,000 compensation being offered by China

State Construction Company Limited is too little to resettle them.

The chairperson of the quarry management committee, Mr Paschal Nalyongo Watiti, said their land and other properties were undervalued yet the evaluation process was not well explained to the discontented residents.

"We have refused and vowed never to leave our homes until we receive reasonable compensation to enable us relocate," he said.

Mr Watiti said they were surprised when the contractor suggested to pay only Shs500,000 to each affected household in disregard of the negative effects the project would have on the community.

"They have cut down trees leaving the ground susceptible to erosion and they are failing to implement the wet stone crashing method as they had agreed. The Chinese are breaching

THE ISSUE

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the terms of their agreement with the community," he said.

Assessment forms obtained by *Daily Monitor* show that the company will pay the land owners a disturbance fee for the two years it will be conducting the stone crashing in their area, 40 per cent compensation for destroyed perennial crops and 10 per cent for annual crops.

During a meeting held at the sub-county headquarters, the affected residents blamed their leaders for failure to involve them in the process of property value assessment.

The community also accused the sub-county chairperson, Mr Bosco Mukhwana, of conniving with the Chinese firm to evict them from their land and pay them little.

"On several occasions, Mr Mukhwana has approached me and the

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Voices

"I was informed that they had reached an agreement and that is why I prepared the contract but to my surprise, the community members are not aware of anything like that,"

YUSUF MUTEBULI,
COMPANY LAWYER

"The President has directed for the re-assessment of the all the beneficiaries for the proper compensation of their land, houses and crops,"

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quarry chairperson, asking us to hoodwink the residents and force them off their land without proper compensation for land and property but I refused," said Mr John Wakirambwa, one of the residents.

Another resident, Mr Alex Biketi, claimed that the sub-county boss has continued to threaten them with eviction.

"He is threatening us that if we refuse to vacate the land for the Chinese to commence their work, he will evict us with the help of the military," Mr Biketi said.

However, Mr Mukhwana accused the residents of failing to see the benefits of the project.

"I work with the Chinese closely because I had made an arrangement with them to refurbish some roads within the sub-county and now the community seems to be failing them," said Mr Mukhwana, accusing the residents of valuing money more than the long term benefits of the project.

The district chairperson, Mr John Musila, also condemned the act of forceful compensation of residents and attempted eviction.

"The affected residents have to be listened to because they have genuine reasons why they have refused to vacate their land," he said.

Mr Musila said there is a need for transparency on matters of land and compensation of the people and property.

"Mr Mukhwana should not threaten residents anymore about the issues of compensation of our land and if he does, the law will deal with him," Mr Musila said.

He also urged the community not to allow their local leaders to determine for them the price of their land.

When contacted, the RDC, Mr Ssenyonjo Kyeyune, said President Museveni directed environment State minister Mary Kitutu who is also the district Woman MP, to get in touch with the responsible ministry to settle the compensation matter with immediate effect for the road construction to continue.