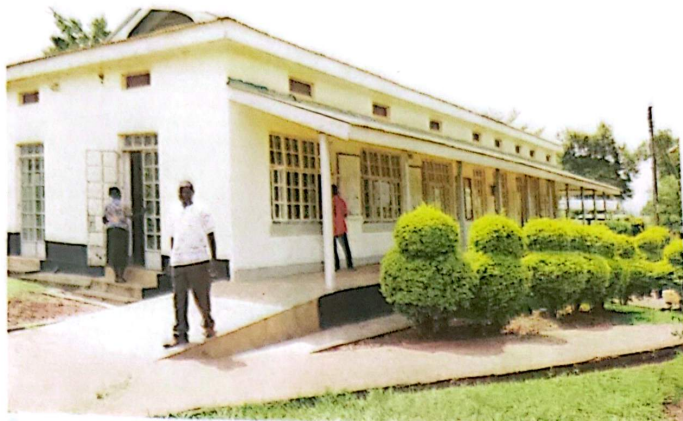


Bukalasa college steps up efforts to save land



Property. A section of the administration block at Bukalasa Agricultural College in Luweero District.
PHOTO BY DAN WANDERA

Demand. The administration is worried that the college could lose more land to encroachers if developers do not present documentary evidence for their projects.

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LUWEERO. Bukalasa Agricultural College in Luweero District is facing incessant threats from land encroachers, including government agencies, which if not addressed, could stifle the college's expansion and development plans.

The only public agricultural college in the country also risks missing out on Shs4.5 billion from the World Bank meant for the construction of an administration block and rehabilitation of the old building.

"The college is fighting to have all the remaining land secured and to possibly track out and reclaim any piece of land which could have been fraudulently grabbed by encroachers," Mr Gelvan Kisolo Lule, the institution's acting principal, said in an interview with *Daily Monitor* recently.

"The institution was recently promoted to the level of a centre for agriculture excellence by the World Bank. We also have a new skills development programme being rolled out by government which entails practical work in farming. We cannot afford to lose more land," he added.

College authorities estimate that more than 70 acres of land belonging to the institution is under the hands of encroachers, some of whom are government agencies and individuals.

The institution's agri-business department had planned to plant about 100 mango fruit trees, but found Chinese contractors cutting through the college fence in the company of Bukalasa land office officials early last month.

The officials claimed they had a land title for that piece of land, adding that it was donated to the lands office by Luweero District administration.

However, college authorities demanded evidence to show that the land was handed over to them.

"We are not objecting and blocking a government project, but we have the obligation to demand documentary evidence in regard to the parceling out of land under Bukalasa Agricultural College without informing the custodians of the land which is titled under Block 146, Plot 68 Bulemezi, measuring 299.9 acres," Mr Kisolo said.

The former district chairperson and now Minister without Portfolio, Hajj Abdul Nadduli, in a recent interview said district officials in 2012 authorised the Ministry of Lands to carve out a two-acre piece of land belonging to the college for the construction of regional land offices at Bukalasa.

Faulted

"When I was the district chairperson, we suggested that land measuring two acres be given away for construction of a lands office. I fault the lands officers and some technical staff for failing to go through the right channels. We thought that the officers had communicated to Bukalasa Agricultural College," Hajj Nadduli said.

"I also believe that the officials from ministries of Agriculture and Lands will meet and sort out the mess... This is not a complicated issue because the two institutions belong to government," he added.

Daily Monitor has learnt that the permanent secretaries of both ministries have agreed that the college allocates land for the construction of the offices.

The college has also drafted a document detailing the guidelines and conditions for which the land will be handed over for construction of the office.

Mr Johnson Ainebyona, the chairperson of Bukalasa Agricultural College Planning and Development Committee, said they have tasked the contractor to ensure that the college community benefits from the project.

ACRES

Bukalasa Agricultural College owns a total of 499.9 acres of land. Part of the land is on Block 146 Plot 367 measuring 399.9 acres.

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We have a document to be handed over to the contractor and the Ministry of Lands detailing our requests. It is good that everybody acknowledges that Bukalasa college is not fighting government projects, but defending the only land available for the students demonstration gardens among other projects.”

JOHNSON AINEBYONA, CHAIRPERSON OF BUKALASA AGRICULTURAL COLLEGE PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE