

Amuru Sugar Works Limited: Lands Ministry moves to open boundaries

👤 Michael Ojok Last Updated: July 14, 2022 📖 3 minutes read



📷 Lamogi clan cultural leader Rwot Otinga (holding a microphone) speaking to youth in the district recently. Photo by (Michael Ojok).

AMURU– The Ministry of Lands, Housing and Urban Development is considering opening boundaries of at least 10,000 hectares of land acquired by the government in Lakang Subcounty for the establishment of the proposed Amuru Sugar Works Limited.

In the past three years, the government has been compensating landowners whose land was identified and surveyed to pave the way for the commencement of the infrastructural development of the area for sugar manufacturing by the Madhvani Group. So far, just four people remain uncompensated out of the over 50 initial landowners.

During a stakeholders fact-finding meeting at the Office of the Resident District Commissioner [RDC] on Tuesday in Amuru district, a team of land surveyors, commissioners among others from the Lands Ministry, initial and current land owners and Amuru district leaders, the meeting agreed that the delayed opening of boundaries is hindering physical planning, among others.



Christopher Olweny, a landowner in Lakang Subcounty said there are some people who are inside the identified area 10,000 hectares, yet their

land is not surveyed.

He said opening boundaries when people are still inside the identified area might cause misunderstanding, recommending that those within the identified area be compensated first.

According to Olweny, some people who were compensated are still using the land for various agricultural activities.

Patrick Omony, one of the petitioners who went to court some 12 years ago in protest of their land being given to the sugar project, said that the local leaders and others must be involved in the sensitisation process so that they make their followers aware of the developments.

Omony said this would help prevent any objections by landowners, especially those who own spotted areas within the 10,000 hectares of land identified and surveyed, with other landowners already compensated by the government.

Michael Lakony, the Amuru district LCV Chairperson said whereas government is moving to open boundaries, there`s need for engagements with the communities, Uganda Development Cooperation, the Attorney General, and the Lamogi Trust Fund to among others discuss the fate of the deed of settlement, the investment share distributions among others.

Lakony said that the meeting should be able to draw a clear roadmap and workplan to avoid scenarios, which are being experienced in the Atiak Sugar project, which has seen several fire outbreaks.

Stephen Odong Latek, the Amuru RDC said they had agreed that there would be series of community engagements with stakeholders and landowners, discuss alternative dispute resolutions as well as revive area land committees.

Naome Kabanda, Director Lands, at the Ministry said the boundary opening would help identify who is inside and outside the project area.

He said that upon opening boundaries, certificates of land ownership would be issued to those surrounding the project area.

According to Kabanda, a team of physical planners from the Ministry of land will coordinate with those in the district to plan the initial project affected area including Amuru Subcounty.

It should be remembered that the Madhvani Group applied to lease 40,000 acres [in Amuru district to establish a sugar plantation and a factory. Government consented to the deal, but the resident communities, through their traditional leaders, objected.

In September 2010, parliament members from the Acholi Sub-region sued the Madhvani Group and the traditional chiefs over the “land giveaway”. In 2012, the Madhvani Group won that case. The most contentious issues were “who owns the land?” and “who has the right to determine how that land can be used?”

On 13 January 2015, State House announced that the community had agreed to withdraw the court case and accept compensation for the land in contention.

It was planned that the sugar estate would sit on 40,000 hectares. 20,000 hectares would be a nucleus estate for the factory and the remaining acreage would be leased out to sugarcane outgrowers. An estimated 7,000 outgrowers were expected to benefit and the sugar estate and factory are expected to create an estimated 8,000 jobs. The entire project budget is estimated at US\$100 million [about Shs 370 billion].

<https://thecooperator.news/4500-sugarcane-outgrowers-in-amuru-suspend-planting-due-to-floods/>

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