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Mubende community in Uganda moves forward with implementation of agreement with New Forests Company

3rd Apr 2014



In July 2013, the Mubende community in Uganda signed an agreement with the New Forests Company through a process of mediation that was facilitated by the Office of the Compliance Advisor/Ombudsman (CAO).

The CAO handles complaints from communities affected by investments made by the International Finance Corporation, the private sector arm of the World Bank. The CAO became involved after receiving a complaint from the Mubende community in December 2011 about impacts resulting from their eviction from the forest where New Forests Company operates its timber plantation.

































Oxfam supported the Mubende community in raising the complaint and has acted as an advisor to the community during the mediation process. The Mubende community and the New Forests Company participated constructively and in good faith in the mediation process to negotiate a mutually beneficial outcome. Both parties have been implementing the agreement which they signed in July 2013, which includes a commitment by the company to contribute funds into a community-run cooperative that has been set up by the Mubende community.

The Mubende Bukakikama Cooperative Society

The cooperative, known as the Mubende Bukakikama Cooperative Society, recently purchased 500 acres of land in Mubende district for the purposes of resettlement and agricultural activities. With the rainy season in Uganda about to start, the community is busy clearing this land to get it ready for planting vegetables, beans and potatoes.

Their vision and ambition is to build a thriving and sustainable cooperative based on agriculture. The cooperative's leaders and members spent a week in March learning how to manage the cooperative's finances and gained practical skills in project management, record keeping and writing minutes. This training was delivered by the Uganda Cooperative Alliance and supported by Oxfam.

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"Hope" for a better future and "security" of living on land they have a title to

These were the words that came up most often in a recent meeting Oxfam had with the community. They spoke also of the challenges that lie ahead, and the work they need to do to link up the community and the cooperative with local government services, businesses and NGOs. To further build the capacity of the cooperative, the CAO is supporting a Cooperative Development Coordinator who will provide strategic and technical assistance to the cooperative as it develops.

The 15 month long mediation process which commenced in March 2012 and concluded in July 2013 has come to be known within the community as "the journey" which has brought them to where they are now. Oxfam supported the community through this journey as an advisor because we felt that the mediation process offered the best opportunity for the community to achieve redress.

The community representatives who negotiated with the New Forests Company worked hard to get the best possible deal for their community through the mediation process. With the same focus and resolve that guided their negotiations in the mediation process, the community's leaders are now working to implement the agreement that they made with the company. Oxfam is continuing to support and advise a second community from neighbouring Kiboga district in its separate mediation with the New Forests Company, also facilitated by the CAO.



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