



Ugandan Government clears Bidco in land claim

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Ugandan Government clears Bidco in land claim

Written by MARGARET NJUGUNAH

NAIROBI, Kenya, Aug 5 - The Ugandan Government has released a statement to disprove allegations levelled against Kenya's Bidco Oil Company over land.



Bidco, which is the lead private sector partner in the Vegetable Oil Development Project (VODP) has been accused of land grabbing in Kalangala District in Uganda, leaving thousands displaced/FILE

Bidco, which is the lead private sector partner in the Vegetable Oil Development Project (VODP) has been accused of land grabbing in Kalangala District in Uganda, leaving thousands displaced.

The accusations, which have been made in print, electronic and social media, stated the company grabbed the land which it is now using to plant palm trees used to manufacture edible oils.

The Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Industry and Fisheries, V. R. Rubarema has however defended the company.

"The Government of Uganda purchased 5,500 hectares of land from landlords in Kalangala District. It then allocated 3,000 hectares out of public land in the same district for this project," said Rubarema in a statement.

"Under the Public Private Partnership agreement, the Government of Uganda undertook the sole responsibility of acquiring land for oil palm development," the Permanent Secretary's statement continued.

The Ugandan government adds that the VODP project has taken infrastructure - such as electric power, roads, ferries and medical facilities- and substantial prosperity to Kalangala's farming communities where Bidco is accused of grabbing land.

"Outgrower farmers whose crop reached maturity are currently earning an average of UGX 600,000 per hectare per month from sale of their oil palm fruits to the palm oil factory."

Additionally, the statement stated that Bidco Company paid UGX 120billion in taxes while employing three thousand five hundred Ugandans in the Oil

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Palm Plantations, Palm Oil Mill in Kalangala and the Jinja Oil Refinery.

“Kalangala Island has risen from a very low position of 71 out of 76 districts (2005) in poverty rankings; it is rated to be among the higher income top 10 districts out of 112 districts in per capita income levels in Uganda in 2014,” said Rubarema in the statement.

According to the statement, only about 25 hectares out of the 8,500 hectares for the project was ever in dispute since 2000 remaining to be matter between tenants and the private land owner.

To ensure that the allegations are cleared, the Permanent Secretary also stated that details of all lands transactions have been made available at the Project Office in Kampala and at Kalangala District Agriculture Office.

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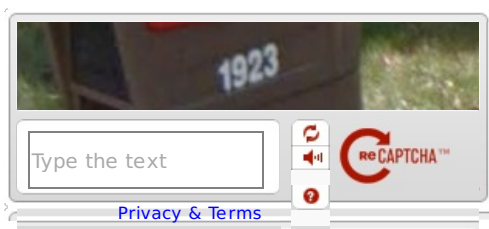
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