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Madhvani in Amuru will bring development to Acholi - Prof Ogenga Latigo

FRIDAY, 10 MAY 2013 13:23 BY JULIUS ODEKE



Prof Morris Ogenga Latigo

Most land in the North is customary land whereby nobody can claim to be the bona fide owner, hence rendering it difficult for anyone to give land away as an individual. This therefore calls for consultation among the people who have a stake in the land in question. For a long time, Acholi leaders ranging from MPs, district, religious and traditional leaders have on several occasions visited Kakira in Jinja District to reach an agreement over the acquisition of Amuru land.

It's almost six years since the Madhvanis started discussions with the people of Acholi sub region and government to secure land on which they can expand their sugar business in the region. The Madhvanis, who own Kakira Sugar Works, want to acquire 20,000 hectares for setting up a sugar processing plant in Amuru District. However, the Acholi leaders mostly the Acholi Parliamentary Group (APG) have objected to the move, saying 'government' wants to grab their land yet it's the only asset that the local people are left with.

Two weeks ago, Prof Morris Ogenga Latigo, formerly the MP for Agago County in Pader District and Leader of Opposition in Parliament, led a delegation of Acholi leaders to Kakira Sugar Works and Kalangala District to visit large scale investments there. He spoke to The Independent's Julius Odeke about what was achieved from the tours.

How far has Madhvani reached with the acquisition of land in Amuru?

The decision of negotiating with Madhvani over Amuru land where Madhvani wants to set up a sugar plant is being spearheaded by the government not an individual as some people are saying. And in this, Amuru District Land Board is the one negotiating about the land with the locals. And in these negotiations, Betty Bigombe is a key person bearing in mind that she is the daughter of the land and I believe she knows how beneficial it will be to the people of Acholi.

However, it should be noted that one of the districts in the region took Amuru District to court saying Amuru allocated land which is not under their charge. That district says they are yet ascertain whether that land is customary land - which is not supposed to be given away anyhow. But I want to assure the general public that for the case of those people who are affected by displacement, Madhvani is willing to compensate them.

And as I speak now, Bigombe has formed a team that is sensitizing people on how compensation shall be effected. Also, it should be noted clearly that government has agreed on the formalization of giving of shares to people. So people will be allowed to buy shares in the Amuru Sugar Complex.

How else shall the people of Acholi region benefit from the sugar factory?

What I know is that there shall be development in the region and the moment development is in the region many people are likely to benefit from that. First, Madhvani says they will set up social infrastructure in the district like it's the case in Kakira. That means infrastructure like schools, a hospital, road network and many others and this will be to the benefit of the people of Acholi.

Also, the moment Madhvani acquires this land, about 20,000 hectares shall be for the out-growers scheme and this is purely for the farmers to grow their cane and sell it to the factory. The local farmers will also learn the modern farming techniques that will enhance agricultural production not only cane but even food production hence helping us to fight hunger in the region.

It's my humble prayer that Acholi leaders as a whole take time to sensitise our people because this is the development that we have been praying for to come to our region.

Reagan Okumu, the APG head, says the locals do not want to give away their land to Madhvani but it's you who is trying to get political relevance in the region. What is your comment?

Well, I can understand the problem of some of these people; they too also want to gain political relevance in region. The reason they are saying that is because they are annoyed because they have tried but failed and now that I am breaking through. They are simply jealous. But I must also say this: If they as the MPs for Acholi sub region fail to provide development to the region, then they do not deserve to be in Parliament.

Why were they elected? It was to provide the people of Acholi with services that include developmental projects and this is one of the projects that they would take as an opportunity and make the people of Acholi benefit from it. First, I am a highly educated person who is an intellectual. I am in Nwoya that is where my farm is, not in Amuru. I was given land in Amuru but I refused because I know how our people behave.

Have you consulted the people about this land?

Look, a delegation of leaders from seven districts in northern Uganda met President Yoweri Museveni. It consisted of religious leaders, cultural leaders, district, and the youth of the region. They were from the districts of, Gulu, Kitgum, Lamwo, Agago, Pader, Amuru, and Nwoya. Also on this delegation were the Resident District Commissioners (RDCs) as well as the seven district chairpersons and the secretaries of production and the youth leaders. Now, which other leaders do they want to be included in the discussions?

Why did you alienate the MPs of the region from these land negotiations?

I can tell you this; these MPs have also visited Kakira to hold talks with Madhvani over the same issue. But also to be very clear I am not responsible for them. The truth of the matter is that it's not true that I am alienating them from these negotiations of land. We want everyone to be involved though of course not everybody in the region can be involved. It's like they are sending a signal to me not to continue with the land negotiations in Amuru.

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What they should be aware of is that I do not fear anyone of the MPs. Whom should I fear? This visit was not about negotiations but to see what development is in Buganda and Busoga regions. That is why we also visited Kalangala Palm Oil Project and Kakira Sugar Works to see how much the people in those regions have achieved from allowing investors on their land.

What lessons did your delegation learn from touring Kalangala?

First of all, the inception of the Kalangala Oil Palm Project was an initiative by the government to address the challenges of vegetable oil demand and production in our country, and to bring development and prosperity to Kalangala District. And the project initially faced stiff resistance from people from outside the district, and even from abroad, pressing locals not to accept to give land for the project.

Given the sensitization by the government and community mobilization by local leaders of Kalangala District, it then led to popular acceptance of the project. Since its inception, the project has transformed the economic livelihoods of local households and Kalangala District in general, and attracted infrastructure development, such as roads and ferries that have greatly facilitated the development of the district. We witnessed that progress ourselves.

I know in Kakira, there are some Acholi people who are working there. Did anyone give a testimony to the delegation that could have possibly impressed the delegation?

Personally, I was very much impressed with one Acholi lady called Achieng who went to Kakira during the time of war in our region. When she reached there, she acquired one acre of land where she started cultivating her sugar cane.

Now as I speak, she has 60 acres of land that she rents and cultivates her cane as an out grower supplying to Kakira Sugar factory. She narrated to us that she has been able to educate her children some up to university level while others are in tertiary institutions. Our people in Acholi can do the same once the Amuru factory is set up. She told us that she has not bought any land in Busoga for her out growing activities and that the natives of Busoga feel jealous of those who have acquired land on rent basis and are now doing well as out growers saying that they have come to get rich on their land.

So, she urged the delegation to offer land to Madhvani to set up that factory which she said would open a big opportunity to the people of Acholi to grow cane as out growers hence changing the livelihoods of the people.

Some critics say you are now a withered political leader who deserves no hearing from the region? What is your comment?

If am a withered politician, then that means I am a useless man. What is bothering them then when I attempt to do things that bring development to my people? However, what the public needs to know is that I never went to Parliament to represent a political party but my people and I did it for two terms. I want to say this; the Acholi Parliamentary Group is like a dry season whereby there is no rain.

As a former Leader of Opposition in the 8th Parliament, some people are saying you are too quiet. What has happened?

Well, some people do not know what others do. I am not quiet, I do guidance to the public, I write articles in the newspapers. During the Forum for Democratic Change (FDC) party elections, I wrote several articles in the newspapers and this was meant to give guidance to the people of Uganda. With the problem of land in our country, I remember I wrote two very strong articles with an aim of guiding the public and government as well.

What is your comment about the debacle in FDC?

Well, it will calm down. What I know in politics is that when some people lose they tend to feel bitter and that is what happened in FDC. However, what is currently happening in FDC is not a debacle because some of our party members were not pleased with the outcome of the elections. But given time, it will cool down and it will move forward. This is a party that many Ugandans have a lot of hope in.

How do you assess Nandala Mafabi's work as a Leader of Opposition?

I have not been following the parliamentary activities since I am concentrating on my farm activities in Nwoya. Also, what the public needs to realize is that I cannot comment on my successor because it will portray a bad image to Ugandans. It's needless for me to do that because some people will say this man lost and that is why he is bitter about his successor.

Is the shadow cabinet doing its role or just filling vacancies in Parliament?

Well, during my time, the shadow cabinet was performing well but I don't know what this current shadow cabinet is doing. It's the public to judge them.

What is your last word?

This egocentrism of our leaders should stop. Our leaders should deliver services and developmental projects to the people whom they represent but not to fight others who are trying their best to ensure that people are served. Let us give Madhvani land to set up a sugar factory. To the best of my knowledge, Madhvani will bring development to the people of Acholi sub region and this will provide job opportunities to the unemployed youth in the region.



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written by pacol, May 13, 2013

Ogenga, much as the Amuru issue can be beneficial to the Acholi people, just make sure for the peoples sake that negotiations are strictly on their (the wanaich's) personal terms. These terms should include a huge part of the profits are allocated to the majority stakeholders and re-employed to their benefit and in Uganda. Something you politicians have no clue about! Why people think you are arm twisting them is because Ogenga and the Bigombes are beginning to bring out the NRM cadre thing! At this particular time in our history this is not a viable option, the Acholi's stand to lose too much!

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Amuru Sugar works is necessary

written by Mate Magwara, May 14, 2013

Prof. Latigo is a well focused leader. Having served in Acholiland for some time in a campaign against the LRA, I found that N. Ug has a strong potential that needs to be exploited. With stability and hard work, the Acholi sub region can feed the rest of the country. Allowing Madhivan or any other investor is another good opportunity. However, to avoid displacement of large sections of the population and some unfair terms as has sometimes become common with some investors, the leaders should ensure their pple don't get a raw deal out of the project. There are more benefits through outgrowing than thru casual employment. Reduce politicking and engage in more development.



Mr

written by kabayekka, May 14, 2013

Why does not this Professor also go to India and take development over there as an exchange?



Mate Magarwa

written by pacol, May 15, 2013

Certainly I believe you and accept that Amuru is blessed with land more productive than most in uganda, and the Army generals around here know that! That is the problem, if you have been to those places and witnessed the uncoordinated grabbing of peoples land by these people then you will know why it is crucial that due process is given to the Acholis on their terms!



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written by pacol, May 15, 2013

Fast tracking the project is making people suspicious of the true intent of Latigo and his new found "Banyanis" (the guys who treat Ugandans and anything darker than themselves as second class citizens) and "Kags" (who by the way puts his weight where it is not needed i.e. by manipulation, bribery plus his 'God given right' to Uganda attitude. Remember the war in the North? Somebody (Kony) is not solely responsible for the problem!



Gov't involvement is inevitable.

written by Mate Magwara, May 15, 2013

First of all, it is not possible that a project of the magnitude of a sugar factory as anticipated should be left betn the investor and the land owners especially if the owners are clans and not individuals and therefore susceptible to sentiments manipulated by pseudo nationalists. Secondly, anybody would want to invest where he/she is sure the investment is safe. Thirdly, many investors have to secure credit to inject into the investments and any such credit will require lobbying and guarantee most ably by gov't. No matter, where U want to invest, Acholiland or heaven, gov't involvement is inevitable. It certainly doesn't stop it frm being a free market economy.



Kony not solely responsible? True.

written by Mate Magwara, May 15, 2013

Pacol, I agree when U want every body to believe that Kony (Joseph) was not the only evil in the war in the North. Fortunately, I fought in the Northern war for quite some time and I don't depend on the Kampala FMs for my information. For certain, without an encouragement among the leaders and some wananchi especially among the Acholi elite, the Kony war couldn't have dragged on this long, the Sudanese gov't support notwithstanding. Am grateful that there is an emergence in the Acholi sub region of many pple who have said no to war and supported the UPDF to defeat LRA. It can't be the pleasure of every body. Forget the so called peace talks. Kony was forced to go where he is. Thank you.



Mr

written by kabayekka, May 16, 2013

Madhvani knows well that about 3000 African Teso or Acholi out grower farmers, if given the same opportunity to grow sugar-cane as he has always been given, sugar production would be high in this country. His agricultural monopoly of sugar production would be no more. Indeed with NAADS the NRM has failed this country. Small scale farmers have the potential to sustain agri- production in these modern times if they are respected and nurtured.



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written by Tin Tin, May 18, 2013

All I can say is Ogenga Latigo is a traitor and therefore no different from dictator Museveni and the so called investor Madvani who want to dispose people of their land through deception and trickery!



Thanks Mate and Kabakekka

written by pacol, May 18, 2013

You have generated strong points! But I have no problem if government must involved! But what model are the Madhvanis going to use? If you research widely on successful out grower projects in the sub-saharan region e.g Mozambique you will realize that the value added process can be a solid foundation for credit schemes (very similar to "assassinated" cooperatives, thanks to you know who).



Mate and Kabba

written by pacol, May 18, 2013

Secondly the investor (the Madhvanis) must be made to ensure farmers get these credits (including providing the necessary field support) and also enjoy the benefits of "second" payments per season, or in other words enjoy the real impact of added cash (bottom line) in the value chain. Gov't's role then is to strictly provide the institutional/constitutional framework to enforce these ideas or concepts (read: no micro management or initiate another disaster like Naads) the indians then give back in their own currency. No ROCKET science here, just greed and political expediency is killing this logic!



Mr.

written by rosaayati, May 18, 2013

Mr. Latigo is a traitor and when M7 goes he will surely go with him. This also applies to Atuku Bigombe who had been promoting M7 since he came to power. There will certainly be a lot of things need overturning when M7 goes and there is nothing permanent in this world. The Latigos of today should know it better.



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written by Blue Water, May 18, 2013

I thought nutty professors on existed movies? 🤔



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written by Blue Water, May 18, 2013

I thought nutty professors existed only in movies?

As someone in opposition, one would have expected such a person to be putting the NRM to task for destroying the country and not joining them to further disenfranchise Ugandans especially northerners.



Prof. Latigo is a Slave trade kayungirizi (Broker)

written by Raymond Otika, May 19, 2013

With due respect to the title, Prof. Ogenga Latigo has lost his marble. Sugarcane industry is highly slave-labor intensive. Look at the Basoga where the Madhvani family established sugar plantation and factory, they are

languishing in stinky poverty and tormented by jiggers! Besides, Mr. M7 has already denounced the minimum wage in order to favor investors. Therefore, whose and what short of development is Prof Latigo talking about? In this light, whoever denounces and fights against a minimum must be a slave trader.



Prof. Latigo is a Slave trade kayungirizi (Broker)
written by Raymond Otika, May 19, 2013

If this scheme succeeds Prof. will not be different from the 19th Century African Chiefs (slave trade Kayungirizi [broker]) who sold their countrymen, women and children into slave cartel. Latigo is a commercial farmer in Amuru, why doesn't he instead mobilize and empower the people into cooperative and grow rice, instead of treacherous sugarcane. In that way the people will own their land labor and profit. That will be development.



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