

Editorial: Amuru Sugar needs support

Editorial

SUNDAY, 12 FEBRUARY 2012 22:21 WRITTEN BY EDITORIAL 5 COMMENTS

Recently, the High Court in Gulu threw out a case filed by some Acholi politicians and elders resisting the allocation of land by the Amuru district land board to the Madhvani group of companies for sugarcane growing.

The court also lifted the temporary injunction that had been put on developing the land. The aggrieved politicians and elders argue that the project is a ploy by some powerful politicians to grab the land; that the land was under customary ownership and belongs to the people who were previously displaced by the war; that the project is a ploy to get hold of the oil in the area; and that the only jobs it can create is sugarcane cutting, which is for slaves.

Clearly these reasons are not convincing enough to deny the region such an important investment. While there is good reason to resist attempts to cut down Mabira forest for sugarcane growing, even if the government doesn't agree, there doesn't seem to be any justifiable reason to stand in the way of Amuru Sugar. Sometimes it is important for politicians to put politics aside and focus on their people's welfare. A sugar factory will inevitably deliver economic benefits to the people of Amuru, Acholi and Uganda in general.

Uganda recently faced an acute sugar shortage, which drove home the point about our underproduction. It's obvious that more sugarcane needs to be grown to serve local and international demand, and the Amuru sugar factory would be a good step in that direction. Like all major projects, there could be negatives, such as displacement or the impact on the environment. For loss of land, the local leaders need to engage the government and the investor, to ensure that alternative land is found for those to be displaced. As for the environment, an environment impact assessment should be conducted and the necessary mitigation measures applied.

Concessions can also be obtained from the investor in form of social corporate responsibility undertakings that would help uplift the region. But on the whole, the advantages of the project outweigh the feared disadvantages.

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Comments

#1 **wodpaco@gmail.com** 2012-02-13 01:15 +2

Very disappointing editorial from the Observer. The first thing we need to acknowledge is that the land belongs to the people of that area. Only the rightful owners of the land can decide what to do with it! Forcing people off their ancestral land in the name of investment can never be justified!

This is what used to go on in colonial Africa and should never be allowed to happen in any "independent" African nation. The people of Acholi are not opposed to investment because like all reasonable people we want to develop our region. The people of Acholi have a right to decide which investments are beneficial to them and which ones are counter productive. After all, IT IS THEIR LAND , THEIR PROPERTY!

Quote

#2 **wodpaco@gmail.com** 2012-02-13 01:20 +2

The judge was wrong to rule the way he did. Like most institutions of state today in Uganda the independence of the judiciary cannot be relied upon because of widespread corruption and intimidation!

It beggars belief that the judge ruled against the people despite the powerful argument he was presented with. He has set a dangerous president. The people of Acholi must unite and resist all

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attempts to grab their land in the name of bogus investments.

Quote

#3 **Jane** 2012-02-13 02:43

-3

Thanks observer for such a positive editorial. You've said it as it needs to be said. All we've heard before were the scare scaremongering of those FDC mps taking advantage of some locals.

Quote

#4 **wodgot** 2012-02-13 21:44

+2

The give away of acholiland by Museveni was part of his programme after raiding our cattle. It's a good thing because it will rejuvenate our resistance and consolidate our solidarity against movement thugs.

I don't respect any court ruling under this gov't because all the appointments of the current Judges were rewards for their support for movement.

Mahdvani was in Jinja as a foreigner and now he owns half of Basogaland. What is your interpretation of building a perimeter wall around square miles of land which owned by the people? Listen Jane, when a capitalist puts a wall fence around a chunk of land, it means 'its now mine!' and that's what we are going to resist.

We don't want landlessness in Acholi as a result of Mahdvani's antics of land grabbing. We can survive without Mahdvani sugar but not without our land. Museveni played with our cattle, this time we shall not allow him to kid with our land.

Quote

#5 **Afedra Robert Iga** 2012-02-14 08:30

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I think the Observer has a point here that we need to all appreciate. I have always argued out that the Acholi sub region together with Adjumani district have been left with a great generation gap due to the long spell of war by the LRA.

There is a cohort of youth between the age of 15 - 40 that are not educated and unemployed yet make the largest portion of the current population of the region. The few of us who do not lie in this cohort can not provide for the daily livelihood of these youths.

In the last two years Gulu district has seen an increased rate in robbery and other crimes which has not been the case in the past and i think there is a great relationship between the existing idle generation and the crime rates. An investment like the Madivani sugar project in Amuru is one of the solutions that can engage the idle and majority youthful minds in this region. Politics is appreciated but at times there is need to sober up and draw a line between politics and realities.

Quote

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