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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
**Kampala-Uganda**

**LIGHT AT THE END OF A DARK TUNNEL: APPEAL COURT HEARS OIL-  
AFFECTED PEOPLE'S COMPENSATION CASES**

**Court makes key decisions**

Fourteen (14) families whose land was compulsorily acquired and used to develop infrastructure belonging to TotalEnergies' Tilenga oil project in Buliisa district prior to compensation have cause to smile after the Court of Appeal heard two cases that they filed.

The families filed the cases against the Ugandan government to enforce their right to receive prompt, fair and adequate compensation that is provided for under Article 26 of Uganda's 1995 Constitution.

The cases are also important for protecting all citizens' and property owners' compensation rights.

The cases include an application seeking court's leave to file an appeal out of time. This case was filed in June 2021. They also include an appeal. The cases were filed at Uganda's Court of Appeal.

Three judges including Justice Geoffrey Kiryabwire, Justice Margaret Tibulya and Justice Cornelia Sabiti Kakooza heard the two cases on Wednesday, October 21, 2026. The hearing took place at the Court of Appeal in Kampala.

During the hearing, which was attended by nearly all the 14 families, the judges asked lawyers from the Attorney General (AG)'s office whether they agreed, or not, to the court hearing the families' appeal, which was filed out of time.

The AG's office was represented by the following lawyers: Franklin Uhwezira and Claire Kukunda. The lawyers did not object to the judges' question.

"When no express objection was made by government's lawyers regarding accepting, or not, for court to hear the families' appeal, the judges indicated that

they would consider the application for extension of time together with the substantive appeal and deliver their decision on both on notice,” Ms. Margaret Talemwa, one of the lawyers of the families, says.

She adds, “This was an encouraging development as it effectively gave us an opportunity to present the substantive appeal for consideration. This means that the judges will consider both the reasons why the families did not appeal within time and the issues raised in the appeal.”

### **THE JOURNEY TO THE APPEAL**

Beginning in 2017, TotalEnergies compulsorily acquired land and other property from 622 asset holders for its Tilenga Industrial Area in Buliisa district.

The land acquisition affected 786 acres of land, including that in which the 14 families had interests. TotalEnergies proposed to pay compensation of UGX 3.5 million per acre of land to the affected people.

The 14 families whose cases are before the Court of Appeal rejected the compensation, arguing that it was inadequate and unfair. Other families also rejected the compensation.

In July 2020, the Government of Uganda (GoU) filed a case against 17 families at the Masindi High Court. The 14 families were among those that were sued. Government sought court’s intervention to compel the families to accept the compensation that they had rejected. Government also sought court’s permission to deposit the families’ compensation with court.

In April 2021, the court ruled in government’s favour, granting it vacant possession of the families’ land.

The affected families had challenges with accessing efficient legal service providers, which denied them an opportunity to file an appeal in time.

Africa Institute for Energy Governance (AFIEGO) provided the families with the services of lawyers, who supported them to file the two cases at the Court of Appeal.

### **FORWARD AND ONWARDS**

Following the case hearing, Mr. Samuel Bigirwenkya, one of the litigants, said, “We wanted to speak in court. We wanted to share our testimonies so that the judges can really see how we are suffering because government, through

TotalEnergies, failed to compensate us adequately. What we hope for is justice and adequate compensation. We hope that court will ensure that we get both.”

### **OTHER CASES HEARD**

Besides the case filed by 14 Tilenga oil project-affected people, the Court of Appeal also heard three cases filed by other Tilenga and East African Crude Oil Pipeline (EACOP)-affected people.

The court heard a-December-2023 appeal filed by some of the [42 families](#) that were sued by the GoU in December 2023. Through the suit that was filed at the High Court in Hoima, government sought court’s permission to deposit the families’ compensation in court and gain vacant possession of their land. The High Court in Hoima granted government’s requests in December 2023.

“During hearing of this case, court observed that there is a need to move from purely rights-based approaches to interest-based resolution of such disputes, that is, solutions that address the project-affected persons’ actual problems rather than declarations of rights without practical results. These were observations and questions from the bench, not decisions,” Ms. Talemwa notes.

She adds, “With all pleadings on record, the court asked whether the parties would agree to have their conferencing notes adopted as their written submissions. The parties agreed. The judges observed that they will consider the record and deliver judgment on notice.”

Court also heard a-May-2025 appeal that was filed by some of the [80 EACOP-affected people](#) following their being sued by the GoU in August 2024. In the suit, the GoU sought orders from court to deposit the families’ compensation in court and gain vacant possession of their land. The orders were granted by the High Court in Masaka.

“On the EACOP-affected people’s case, court ordered the lawyers of the affected people to submit the evidence in the people’s case and serve the Attorney General with this evidence by October 23, 2026. The Attorney General is supposed to respond to the people’s evidence by October 30, 2026, while the lawyers of the families are to file their response by November 4, 2026,” Ms. Talemwa says.

The other application, filed by some Tilenga oil-affected people to prevent their eviction, was withdrawn from the court as it had been overtaken by events. The appeal was filed in February 2025. The affected people’s property was [demolished](#) in March 2025 before the appeal was heard.

\*\*\*\*\*ENDS\*\*\*\*\*

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