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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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**AFTER FIVE YEARS OF WAITING, TILenga OIL PROJECT-AFFECTED
FAMILIES FINALLY GET THEIR DAY IN COURT**

The Court of Appeal will today, October 21, 2026, hear a case filed by 14 families from Buliisa district. The families filed the case in June 2021.

The families are among the 622 asset holders that were displaced from 786 acres of land for the Tilenga oil project.

As they head to court, the families, which have waged a six-year court battle including in the High Court, hope that they will finally receive justice.

BACKGROUND

The people filed two cases before the Court of Appeal in June 2021. Through the cases, they sought the leave of court to file an appeal out of time.

They also appealed against an April 2021 High Court decision that allowed the Government of Uganda (GoU) to deposit their compensation with court and gain vacant possession of their land.

HOW IT BEGAN

Buliisa district is at the epicentre of Uganda's oil exploitation efforts. The district is home to some of the 426 oil wells that are to be drilled by TotalEnergies E&P U. B.V. under its Tilenga oil project.

The district is also home to numerous oil infrastructure including the Tilenga Industrial Area, feeder pipelines, wellpads, oil rigs, oil roads and others.

To set up the above and other infrastructure, TotalEnergies acquired land on behalf of the GoU in the district.

In 2017, the company commenced compulsory land acquisition processes for its Industrial Area. The compulsory land acquisition affected 622 asset holders and 786 acres of land.

TotalEnergies proposed to pay a meagre Shs. 3.5 million per acre of land to the people whose land it was compulsorily acquiring.

Some of the people, including the 14 families who will have their day in court today, rejected the compensation. While other families eventually accepted to receive the compensation that they were being given, some families stood firm, demanding that in compliance with Article 26 of the 1995 Uganda Constitution, they are paid fair and adequate compensation.

GOVERNMENT SUES ITS PEOPLE

In July 2020, the GoU sued 17 Tilenga oil project-affected people. Government, which filed the case against the people at the Masindi High Court, asked court to compel the people to take the low compensation that the people had rejected. Government also asked court to allow it to deposit the affected people's compensation with court.

In April 2021, the court ruled in favour of government, allowing it to deposit the affected people's compensation with court. Court also granted government vacant possession of the people's land, discharged it from any liability for the compensation sums once deposited, and directed the affected people to collect their compensation from court within three months of the deposit.

"We were dissatisfied with the High Court's decision but most of us are poor farmers and fishermen. We could not afford a lawyer to file an appeal before the time for appealing expired. We eventually got a lawyer and filed a case seeking court's permission to file an appeal out of time," Mr. Michael Sabiti, one of the people that filed the case, says.

Africa Institute for Energy Governance (AFIEGO) supported the people to file the appeal and application to file out of time.

EXPECTATIONS FROM COURT OF APPEAL

The Court of Appeal fixed both the Tilenga oil project-affected people's application to appeal out of time and their appeal for hearing on the same day (today). If the court grants the leave to appeal out of time, the people's appeal will be validated and will proceed to hearing.

The case was fixed for hearing after the affected people and their lawyers wrote nine (9) letters to the judiciary and undertook over 15 media engagements between 2021 and July 2026, asking that their case is fixed for hearing.

Ms. Dorothy Mbabazi, who is one of the people that filed the case, says, “We are happy that our cases are finally going to be heard. We have waited for so long, and many of us became poorer because our land was taken without compensation. We hope that we will get the justice that we hope for from court.”

OTHER CASES TO BE HEARD

Besides the above-discussed case, four more compensation cases that AFIEGO supported other Tilenga and East African Crude Oil Pipeline (EACOP)-affected people to file are to be heard by the Court of Appeal today.

Mr. Dickens Kamugisha, AFIEGO’s CEO, says, “The people that AFIEGO is supporting approached the organisation asking for help. The people argued that their land rights, livelihoods and climate adaptation capacity needed to be protected through appealing against unfair and unconstitutional court decisions that allowed government to take their land prior to compensation.

AFIEGO supported the people and we hope that the people’s appeals will be successful for the benefit of all Ugandans who need to be protected from precedents that allow government to take possession of citizens’ land prior to compensation.”

*****ENDS*****

For more information, contact:

Ms. Diana Nabiruma

Manager, Programmes and Communications, AFIEGO

dnabiruma@afiego.org