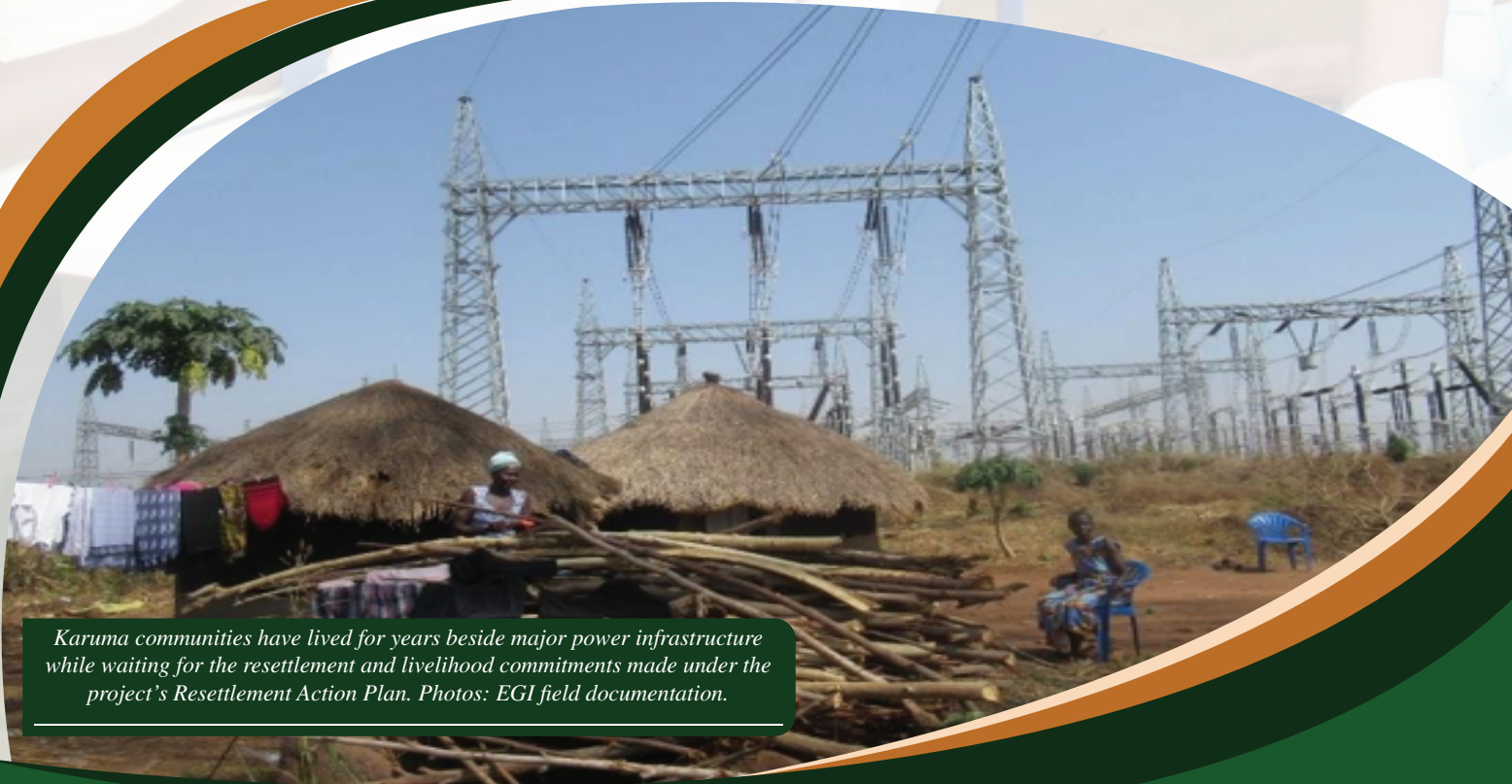




HOW EGI'S COMMUNITY LED ADVOCACY HELPED REVIVE HOPE FOR FAMILIES AFFECTED BY THE KARUMA HYDROPOWER PROJECT



Karuma communities have lived for years beside major power infrastructure while waiting for the resettlement and livelihood commitments made under the project's Resettlement Action Plan. Photos: EGI field documentation.

In June 2026, the Ministry of Energy and Mineral Development invited bids to construct homes and access roads for Karuma Hydropower Project-affected families at Lapono Village in Nwoya District. T

The procurement notice was a long-awaited sign of movement after more than a decade of delay and a significant milestone in a community advocacy journey supported by EGI since 2022.

A PROMISE THAT REMAINED UNFULFILLED

The Karuma Hydropower Project is one of Uganda's largest public infrastructure investments in recent memory costing over USD 1.6 billion in funding. To create space for the 600-megawatt facility and its associated infrastructure, the Government of Uganda acquired approximately 465.52 hectares of land in communities including Karuma, Awoo, Nwoya and Akurudia in Kiryandongo and Oyam districts. The project's studies estimated that 414 households housing about 3,735 people would be affected.

A Resettlement Action Plan finalised in 2012 was intended to guide compensation, physical resettlement, livelihood restoration and the provision of basic social services. Among its commitments was the construction of permanent homes for 119 vulnerable households identified by the RAP, these categories included widows, older persons, child-headed households, persons with disabilities, persons living with HIV and other families considered unable to resettle safely without direct support.

Yet the power project moved toward completion while this obligation to full compensation prior to acquisition mandated under 26 of 1995 Uganda's constitution remained unresolved.

Families continued living in uncertainty under a long-standing project cut-off date, unable to make secure long-term investments in their land. Some households reported inadequate or missing compensation; others lost access to productive farmland and livelihoods. Children dropped out of school, households struggled with food insecurity, and some families remained in unsafe locations close to high-voltage infrastructure.

By the time EGI brought the case before Parliament in 2022, community records indicated that 16 intended beneficiaries had died while waiting for resettlement.

EGI journey to restorative advocacy began by listening to affected communities

In March 2022, EGI began a sustained process of engagement with women, young people, elders and other affected residents in the Karuma project area. Rather than beginning with a predetermined advocacy message, EGI first worked with communities to understand their experiences, review available project documents and identify the commitments that had not been fulfilled.

Between 2022 and 2023, EGI teams visited affected villages, held community discussions and reviewed the Resettlement Action Plan, valuation forms, payment records and findings from public audit processes. These engagements transformed scattered individual complaints into organised evidence. They also helped affected people understand that the hardships they were experiencing were connected to specific resettlement, compensation and livelihood commitments that could be pursued through formal accountability mechanisms.



EGI and legal advisers meeting affected residents to document grievances and gather records for parliamentary engagement, 2022-2023. Photo: EGI.

The accounts EGI documented were consistent: cash compensation was often insufficient to secure equivalent land; some claims remained unpaid or disputed; households had lost income from farming and local trade; and vulnerable people were bearing the heaviest consequences of prolonged delay. These findings became the basis of EGI's advocacy strategy grounded not only in stories of suffering, but also in project records, legal obligations and verifiable household evidence. To ensure the issue of karuma gets into the public attention, EGI mobilized the media to publish stories documented here

Moving community grievances into Parliament
On 5 September 2023, EGI, working with Karuma project-affected communities, submitted a formal petition to the Speaker of Parliament. The petition asked Parliament to investigate

compensation and resettlement failures, compel urgent construction of the promised houses, ensure fair treatment of outstanding claims and establish a functional grievance-handling mechanism.

The petition placed the communities' demands into the official parliamentary record.

[Read EGI's September 2023 petition to Parliament](#)

On 12 September 2023, the Speaker referred the petition to Parliament's Committee on Environment and Natural Resources. This was an important shift: concerns that had remained unresolved through administrative channels were now subject to a formal legislative review.

When the Committee invited EGI to appear in October 2023, EGI coordinated the participation of ten affected and vulnerable community representatives from Awoo and Ayuda. Their presence ensured that the case was not discussed only by institutions speaking about communities; affected people were able to speak directly to legislators and support the claims with their own experiences.



EGI and representatives of Karuma project-affected communities appearing before Parliament's Committee on Environment and Natural Resources. Photo: EGI.

EGI presented the failure to relocate the vulnerable households, alleged violations of land and compensation safeguards, uncertainty surrounding the proposed relocation site and the human cost of the long delay. The Committee acknowledged that the complaints required investigation and asked EGI to return with detailed proof of ownership, crop losses, valuation discrepancies and payment status.

Turning testimony into an evidence file
EGI responded by taking the parliamentary process back to the communities. On 15 October 2023, a team of EGI staff, lawyers and field officers returned to Karuma to review land records, valuation forms and payment information with affected households. The team documented testimonies, compared amounts assessed with amounts received, identified unresolved claims and collected video evidence showing the effect of delayed relocation.



EGI staff and lawyers reviewing household evidence for submission to Parliament, October 2023. Photo: EGI.

On 23 October 2023, EGI submitted the compiled evidence to the Clerk of Parliament. This step was crucial. It converted the advocacy from a general appeal for sympathy into a documented accountability case that legislators could investigate, test and use in making recommendations.

Bringing communities and decision-makers face-to-face

EGI continued following the parliamentary process and working with partners to keep the issue visible. On 20 August 2024, EGI and Friends with Environment in Development coordinated an engagement involving more than

400 community representatives, members of Parliament's Natural Resources Committee, the Minister of State for Energy and representatives of Sinohydro.

The meeting enabled affected people to present their concerns directly and resulted in concrete demands for timelines, project documentation, the return of land titles where compensation was incomplete, a comprehensive status report on affected persons, and accountability for outstanding community obligations. The engagement also ensured that the petition did not remain a document in Kampala; the parliamentary process was connected to the people whose lives it concerned.



A community representative addresses members of Parliament, government officials and other stakeholders during the high-level engagement in Kiryandongo, August 2024. Photo: EGI/FED.

EGI published the key resolutions from this engagement to support public follow-up and accountability.

Parliament validates the concerns and orders action

After reviewing the petition, holding meetings and conducting field inquiries, the Committee on Environment and Natural Resources presented its findings to Parliament in August 2024. The Committee confirmed that implementation of the Resettlement Action Plan had been delayed for approximately twelve years and that the vulnerable households had still not been relocated.

The Committee recommended that the Ministry of Energy and Mineral Development expedite implementation of the Resettlement Action Plan, investigate unresolved and inadequate

compensation claims, strengthen oversight of valuation processes and accelerate construction of houses for the vulnerable project-affected families.

The parliamentary report formally recognised the petition submitted by EGI on behalf of the affected communities and documented the evidence gathered through the process.

During the regional parliamentary sitting in Gulu, Deputy Speaker Thomas Tayebwa urged the Ministry to treat the matter as urgent and consider a supplementary budget for resettlement and compensation. The Ministry reported that it was engaging NEMA and Nwoya District Local Government to secure the approvals required for construction at Lapono. Parliament's public record made clear that the project's social obligations could no longer be treated as an invisible or secondary issue.

The direction and ministerial response were also reported on Parliament's official website.

[Read Parliament's account of the debate.](#)

The breakthrough: from recommendations to procurement

The advocacy did not end with the adoption of a report. EGI continued tracking government commitments and calling for implementation. Government monitoring information for the first half of FY2024/25 confirmed that the 119 resettlement houses had still not been started, even after the Karuma plant had been commissioned. The same report recommended that the Ministry expedite construction of the pending houses to resolve the long-standing resettlement obligation.

This official acknowledgement provided an additional benchmark for follow-up.

[See the Ministry of Finance monitoring report for FY2024/25](#)

Then, in June 2026, the Ministry of Energy and Mineral Development issued an open domestic

bidding notice for construction of residential houses for Karuma Hydropower Project-affected persons at Lapono Village, Nwoya District. The procurement reference MEMD/WRKS/2025-2026/00030/1-2 covered the proposed houses under two lots. A related procurement notice sought construction of approximately 4.328 kilometres of gravel access roads at the resettlement site.

These notices are the clearest tangible indication to date that the Government has moved from repeated assurances toward an implementable procurement process.

[View the residential houses bid notice and the access roads bid notice](#)

The FY2026/27 parliamentary policy process also recorded a UGX 10 billion allocation toward pending Karuma project-affected-person compensation obligations, against a substantially larger estimated outstanding requirement. EGI welcomes the allocation as progress while recognising that it is not sufficient to settle all claims.

What EGI's advocacy helped achieve

Milestone	Result
2022-2023	Community grievances were systematically documented and connected to RAP, compensation and livelihood obligations.
Sept. 2023	EGI's petition secured formal referral of the Karuma case to Parliament's Committee on Environment and Natural Resources.
Oct. 2023	Affected people appeared before Parliament, and EGI submitted a detailed evidence file based on household records and testimonies.
Aug. 2024	More than 400 community representatives engaged MPs, the Energy Ministry and Sinohydro; Parliament adopted recommendations for urgent action.
June 2026	Government advertised procurement for the promised houses and access roads at Lapono, converting a long-standing commitment into a tendered process.

The most important achievement is not a single meeting, petition or newspaper notice. It is the full chain of change: communities organised their concerns; EGI helped document and legally frame the evidence; Parliament investigated and validated the grievances; government

institutions were pressed to commit to action; and the resettlement obligation entered a procurement process.

This journey demonstrates the value of sustained, evidence-based and community-led advocacy. It also shows that affected people are more likely to influence decisions when they are supported to speak for themselves, when their claims are documented, and when civil society combines field engagement with legal and parliamentary accountability mechanisms.

A milestone - not the end of the struggle
EGI recognises the June 2026 bid notices as a significant success and a source of renewed hope. However, a procurement notice is not the same as completed houses, secure relocation or restored livelihoods. The families have waited for too long for implementation to be assumed.

EGI will therefore continue monitoring the procurement and construction process, visiting the Lapono resettlement site, tracking compliance with parliamentary recommendations and documenting progress and gaps. The organisation will also continue advocating for full settlement of outstanding compensation claims, transparent handling of land titles, effective grievance mechanisms and safeguards against potential human-wildlife conflict near the proposed resettlement area.

For the Karuma communities, justice will be realised when every eligible family has received what was promised, relocated safely and rebuilt a dignified and sustainable livelihood. For EGI, this success story is evidence that persistent advocacy can move institutions - but it is also a commitment to remain alongside the communities until government action is fully implemented.

From village meetings to Parliament, and from parliamentary recommendations to a government tender, the Karuma story shows what becomes possible when affected communities have evidence, organisation and sustained allies.

EGI petition to the Speaker of Parliament, September 2023 •

Parliamentary Committee report on the Karuma petition, 2024 •

“Parliament of Uganda: “Resettle Karuma power project affected persons •

EGI/FED resolutions from the August 2024 community engagement •

Government monitoring report on the pending resettlement houses, FY2024/25 •

MEMD procurement notice for residential houses at Lapono, June 2026 •

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